



Sight& Sound



The BFI London Film Festival Special

CRUEL BRITANNIA: BEN WHEATLEY'S

SIGHTSERS

Jacques Audiard on Marion Cotillard and 'Rust and Bone' **Sally Potter** on the making of 'Ginger & Rosa' **On the Road** Walter Salles brings Kerouac to the screen **The Shining** decoding Kubrick's puzzle-box horror **The Dark Side of Ealing** from 'It Always Rains on Sunday' to 'The Ladykillers'



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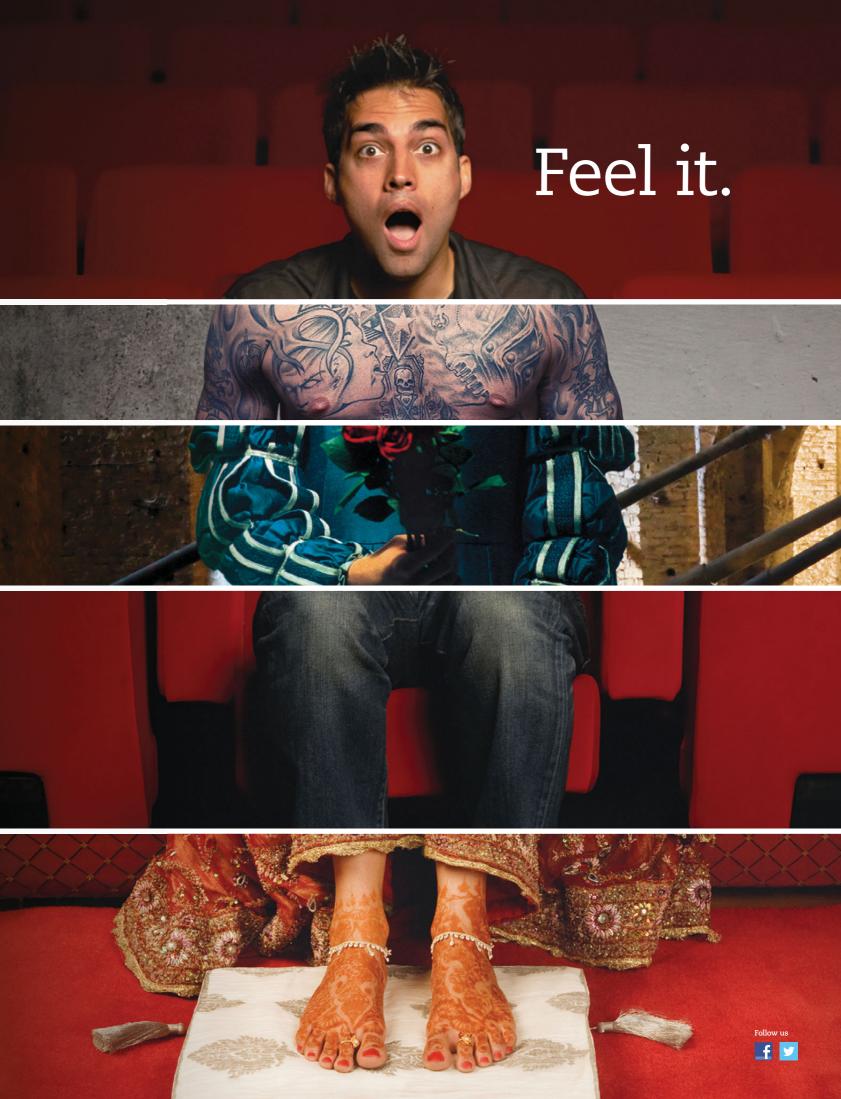








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Welcome





Showing at The BFI London Film Festival Overseas readers must forgive our indulgence here as we mark the 56th BFI London Film Festival (10-21 October), this time in a different fashion. Our

30 recommendations for films at the festival have been readable online for some time, and our rolling blog posts will appear as usual during the festival's run, but coverage inside the magazine is scattered throughout and badged as above. What we're proudest to tell you about is our own gala screening of Cristian Mungiu's *Beyond the Hills* (above) on 12 October. It's

a finely shaded melodrama of passion and paranoia set among a group of nuns as they become convinced that the visiting friend of one of their number is possessed. We're saving further coverage of that film for when it's released. But the best place to start on the BFI LFF in these pages is perhaps my interview with the festival's new creative head Clare Stewart (p.10.) Follow it with our features on Ben Wheatley's painfully funny *Sightseers* (p.30), Sally Potter's braintingling *Ginger & Rosa* (p.34) and Jacques Audiard's pulverising love story *Rust and Bone* (p.36). **Nick James**

VIENNALE

Vienna International Film Festival

OCTOBER 25-NOVEMBER 7, 2012

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Sight&Sound

(incorporating Monthly Film Bulletin) Published monthly by the BFI

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Volume 22 Issue 10 (NS) ISSN 0037-4806 USPS 496-040

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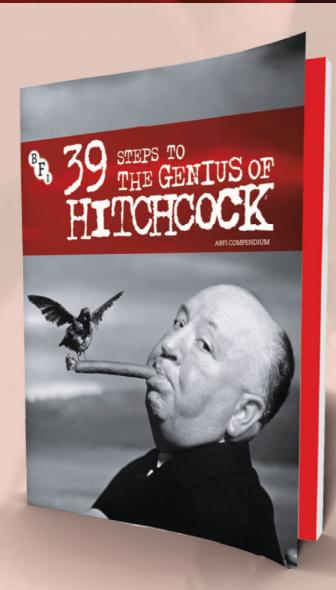


And online this month London Film Festival blog | Young Journalist Competition | the real Beat cinema | Five Broken Cameras | John Akomfrah's *Hauntologies* and more bfi.org.uk/sightsound

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Printer Wyndeham Group

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Comag Specialist
Tel: 01895 433800

Bookshop distribution

Central Books **Tel:** 020 8986 4854

Sight & Sound (ISSN 0037-4806) is published monthly by British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London MTTLIN and distributed in the USA by Mail Right Int., 1637 Stelton Road B4, Piscataway, NJ 08854 Periodicals Postage Paid at Piscataway, NJ and additional mailing offices OST MASTER: Send address changes to Sight and Sound c/o Mail Right International Inc. 1637 Stelton Road B4, Piscataway, NJ 08854

Piscataway NJ 08854 Subscription office:

For subscription queries and sales of back issues and binders contact: Subscription Department, Sight & Sound, Alliance Media PO Box 2068, Bournehall House Bournehall Road, Bushey WD23 3ZF Tel: 020 8955 7070

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Annual subscription rates: UK £45, Eire and ROW £68 £10 discount for BFI members



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Editorial Nick James



CINEMA'S FALL

Here is the weather forecast: "thundery with dismay". This is how David Thomson describes Paul Thomas Anderson's *The Master* in a memorable counterblast to the generally positive response the film has received (www.tnr.com/article/books-and-arts/ magazine/107217/there-will-be-dud). But the phrase could equally describe Thomson's review itself. The headline calls the film "mediocre" and a "dud", yet if you look hard Thomson doesn't find too much that's 'wrong' with it. He says it's "pretentious", but in an approving way; it's a "mess", but he likes films you have to figure out for yourself a little. The main complaint is that "The Master never becomes a story, or a satisfactory shape"; there are grumbles about how the performances dominate, and overall he finds its portrayal of the times insufficiently historical.

I myself found *The Master* compelling. Nobody I was with was "laughing out loud at its being such a disaster". But I'm not going to advocate the film here; I only want to suggest that Thomson's dismay stems from the fact that he wanted the film to be a masterpiece – that he was comparing *The Master* with Paul Thomas Anderson's other brilliant work and found it didn't quite measure up. Which is, of course, unfair since – compared with the vast majority of other releases – *The Master* is on a different planet.

Thomson is not alone, however. That keening contrarian Armond White has also had a more vicious pop at the film (cityarts.info/2012/09/17/battle-of-the-andersons). His argument arises out of a comparison between Paul T. Anderson and Paul W.S. Anderson, the director of *Resident Evil: Retribution*. His verdict? "The differences immediately reveal how a pseudo-serious artiste fails the aesthetic and emotional impact of commercial craftsmanship." Ouch. (For S&S's verdict on Paul W.S. Anderson's film, see p.101.)

Touching on these negative reviews of *The Master* is just by way of noting one or two consequences of what another critic, David Denby, describes as "that dolorous autumn leaves season" — a season that finds me at odds, sadly, with several of our most distinguished contributors. On p.125 I take issue with parts of J. Hoberman's important new book *Film After Film*, which seeks to argue a profound shift in 21st-century filmmaking as a consequence of the combination of the arrival of digital and the

Conditions prevent any consensus being formed as to what constitutes the 'great' cinema of our era. The greatest obstacle is the distrust in the continuing effectiveness of cinema as an artform



9/11 attacks. I'm not out here to try to discredit anyone's opinion. What I'm more conscious of are the conditions that — as our 2012 critics' poll revealed — prevent any consensus being formed as to what constitutes the 'great' cinema of our era. I'd argue that the greatest obstacle is distrust in the continuing effectiveness of cinema as an artform.

We are, of course, at the beginning of the Oscar season, so there's no better time than now to release a jeremiad on the state of cinema. That's what David Denby has done in the same publication Thomson's Master review appears in (www.tnr.com/article/ books-and-arts/magazine/107212/has-hollywoodmurdered-the-movies). Happily, this time I agree with almost every word of his attack on Hollywood's utter reliance on empty blockbusters of the Avengers variety (a thrilling spectacle though that film is, for as long as you're watching it). Denby says that we, the cinephile fraternity, can't do anything much to persuade audiences to see what we love. Autumnal disgruntlement, then, is the best we can manage. But too much film writing today seems to revolve around critics of the baby-boom generation worrying about the end of cinema and the absence of 'masterpieces'.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSORS

The results of the recent election of a BFI member governor show that just seven per cent of those eligible cast their vote (www.bfi.org.uk/about-bfi/senior-staff-governors-bfi-fellows/election-new-membergovernor). Article 13 of the rules for electing a BFI member to the board of governors requires that ten per cent of the electorate participate in the election. When this is not the case, the board of governors determines how to fill the vacancy. The board has therefore decided to appoint the candidate who received the most votes in this election, Cy Young (749 votes), for a term of one year commencing on 30 September.

Rushes

EMOTION CAPTURE

As the new director of the BFI London Film Festival, Clare Stewart has introduced a new thematic approach

Bv Nick James



When Clare Stewart, having run the Sydney Film Festival, arrived at the BFI late last year to take on a new role that combined running the BFI London Film Festival with

overseeing the BFI Southbank programme, many observers were concerned that the combination of roles might be too much for one person. The litmus test for that was always going to be her first festival programme. The BFI LFF had been steered with tremendous skill and authority by her predecessor Sandra Hebron, but the shape of the programme had remained more or less the same for over a decade. Charged with the task of attracting new audiences to a festival already reaching its capacity, Stewart has expanded the festival into more cinemas, shortened its length and quite radically restructured the programme, grouping films in their competition strands and under new emotion-prompt categories: Love, Debate, Dare, Laugh, Thrill, Cult, Journey and Sonic. She's certainly grasped the task with both hands.

Nick James: Part of your strategy for the BFI LFF is to reach out to a wider audience, but what do you want to say about it to our readership, who are part of the core audience?

Clare Stewart: I came into a festival in a very healthy position – it had a very significant audience base and a very loyal following, as well as a very strong profile internationally. One of the first things I looked at was how we could continue to build on its success within those frameworks, to build the audience and the international profile, because those things are what attract sales agents and producers and filmmakers to trust us with their films. The changes to the programme reflect those priorities. With a festival that's got to a capacity of 80 per cent you've not much room for growth, so [the question was] how do we build a new structure which allows it to continue to



Mistress of ceremonies: BFI head of exhibition and festival director Clare Stewart

Chris Marker

In honour of the great film-essayist (below), who died in July, there will be a day of free screenings of Marker's work at London's Horse Hospital on Sunday 21

October. Curated by Chris Darke and Gareth Evans, 'Chris Marker (1921-2012): Memory of the Image' will feature rare Marker films and invited guests. www. fugitiveimages.org.uk

Peter Nestler

Though little-known in the UK, Peter Nestler is one of the most important figures in post-war German cinema, and a retrospective of his films, including 'By the Dike Sluice' (1962, right) plays at Tate Modern, the Goethe Institute and Sheffield Showroom, 9-17 November.



grow? The spread of venues that we're going to and the [shorter] duration are about taking that festival model out more broadly. And the changes to the programme dovetail into those priorities. So, taking what was already there, these fantastic awards – the Sutherland Award, which has built up a significant reputation, and the more recent additions of the Best Film Award, Best British Newcomer – we said, "Let's create a section that makes them much more apparent for audiences." This way you get double the value, because international eyes are always on what's in competition. And it's interesting, because it's a very traditional model, but it's come back around in the age of social media. People now have a forum in which to talk about what they think is going to win.

NJ: For those who've been going to the festival for several years, are there big changes in the experience in store for them?

CS: The stranding of the programme is obviously a big difference in terms of how you actually think about making your selection. To position the films by way of what sort of emotional response they might engender means that you have a much more diverse mix within each section. So you have to dedicate yourself to reading the programme guide really carefully, because something might just get by you if you don't!

NJ: It sounds like you're increasing the mystique around a film.

CS: In some ways you are. And in other ways you're positioning them in such a way that you open them up to a broader audience. For the festivalgoer for whom it's about that compelling axis between the moviegoing heartland of London in Leicester Square and the cultural hub of Southbank, they will have the same experience they have had traditionally. But for those who perhaps come less often now because of life commitments, they might tap into some at their local cinema.

NJ: You're hinting at a greying audience? CS: No, not at all.

NJ: Or a child-rearing audience?

CS: Yeah, the mix. Life in general has got busier for most people.

NJ: Which is a very important point.

CS: Yeah, I think so. As for the greying audience, that was one of the things I thought I might find looking at the data, but in terms of age demographic, the audience is very broad. I'm very interested in diversifying the audience and the new pathway sections have been really

To introduce a section like 'Cult', for example, is perhaps not what has previously been identified with the BFI LFF

designed with that in mind. Of course, we've still got that fabulous selection – the Cannes Palme d'Or winner in *Amour*, the Golden Bearwinner in *Caesar Must Die*, those kind of highly anticipated films from other festivals. But London also has a terrific group of programme advisers who are bringing things in at the very edge of the programming sword. To introduce a section like 'Cult', for example, is perhaps not what has previously been identified with the BFI LFF. Certainly there's a change to the programme fabric, but I do think that anybody who wants the festival experience they've always had will be able to find it.

NJ: Is there some element of the programme that's like a signature for you?

cs: If you're looking for my curatorial signature, then you would find that very much in the Official Competition line-up. I love that there are four films directed by women: Deepa Mehta's Midnight's Children, Ginger & Rosa by Sally Potter, Cate Shortland's Lore and also Rama Burshtein's Fill the Void – a film that I feel particularly passionate about. It's a first-time film, [so] it could have been in the running for the Sutherland, but with such an assured and compelling first work, I really wanted to put it in that platform.

Taking what is a very different kind of approach to the other categories is also something that excites me – the idea that we distil the festival to a set of responses that excite people about going to the cinema. To be thrilled, to fall in love, to be challenged – those kinds of responses. It's about homing in on what's most compelling about going to see films.

NJ: People who worry about cinema manipulating our emotions might have some concerns about that approach.

CS: Well, they could have those concerns if they couldn't find films which stimulate their intellect. Those films are all through this programme, so that would [only] be a valid criticism if somehow the programme was ignoring the intellect. It's so not ignoring the intellect.

1

The 56th BFI London Film Festival runs from 10 to 21 October

ANATOMY OF A MOVIE LOOPER



18% The Terminator (1984)

15% Twelve Monkeys (1995)

13% Timecop (1994)

12% Back to the Future (1985)

10% La Jetée (1962)

8% Timecrimes (2007)

7% The Butterfly Effect (2004)

6% The Matrix (1999)

5% Primer (2004)

3% Children of Men (2006)

2% The Kid (2000)

1% Days of Heaven (1978)

Leeds Film Festival

This year's event boasts two enticing retrospectives: one devoted to Russian filmmaker Andrei Konchalovsky, another to the great Japanese actress Tanaka Kinuyo, star of films by Ozu and Naruse – and of course Mizoguchi's 'The Life of Oharu' (right). 1-18 November.



Viennale

The Viennale celebrates its 50th year in November, with a programme of what is sure to be challenging, interesting new cinema, plus a tribute to Fritz Lang (right).

Fear and Desire



Stanley Kubrick's little-seen 1953 debut feature (left) – which he was famously dismissive of and tried to suppress – is finally being made available

on both DVD and Blu-ray in January 2013. The Masters of Cinema label is bringing out a new restoration of the film by the Library of Congress and Kino Lorber.

TYPE CASTING

The typewriter in films represents both free self-expression and a symbol of everything correct and controlled about adult life

By Hannah McGill

On his first day at borstal, the protagonist of François Truffaut's The 400 Blows (1959), Antoine Doinel, tells a fellow inmate what he stole to land him there. "A typewriter! Not very intelligent!" jeers the other boy, a hardened enough thief to know that such machines have serial numbers. In truth, whatever Antoine has yet to learn about self-preservation, a paucity of intelligence is the last of his problems. His schisms with authority stem from his sensitivity, restlessness and curiosity, not a lack of smarts. He instinctively reacts to the world verbally, creatively, parodically: he kicks off the film by writing an indignant account of his latest punishment in rhyme on the blackboard ("Here suffered unjustly poor Antoine Doinel..."), applies a creator's perfectionism to the task of forging a sick note and experiences quasi-religious bliss upon discovering Balzac.

Antoine embraces criminality out of pique and listlessness rather than need, yet the objects he steals still express things lacking in his life. Pin-ups are passed around at school, but more expressive of what Antoine craves from women - frozen out as he is by his sexy, indifferent mother – is the bottle of milk he filches when he first flees home. The typewriter he takes from the office of his adoptive father. Why that, of all things? It's a sentimental gesture in support of his mother - whom he has seen disparaged by his father for trying to better herself by learning to type - and an act of defiance against his father's petty controls. But the machine also stands for Antoine's burdensome relationships with authority and the written word. The typewriter is both a potential form of free self-expression and achievement, and a symbol of everything correct, mechanised and controlled about adult life.

This tension reflects the dual status of the typewriter as an emblem of all that is inorganic and industrialised, and a romantic accoutrement of the 20th-century garret-dwelling writer. "I believe it will print faster than I can write," unsure early adopter Mark Twain typed to his brother in 1875. "It piles an awful stack of words on one page. It don't muss things or scatter ink blots around..." This absence of muss and blotting, however, extracts a certain romance from writing. Cinematically, handwriting can be portrayed as an organic flow from the body, an extension of the senses. Handwriting is, after all, a unique expression of the self and messing with it a dangerous threat to that self. In Sunset Blvd (1950) Norma Desmond is doomed as soon as she invites Joe Gillis to decode the "childish scrawl" in which she's written her massive Salome script; in Heathers (1988), it's Veronica's ability to copy others' handwriting that allows her to forge notes passing her classmates' murders off as suicides; in Primer (2004), the sinister side-effects of time travel are indicated by the deterioration of the characters' handwriting



The criminal type: Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel in François Truffaut's 'The 400 Blows'

The typewriter is an emblem of all that is inorganic and industrialised, and a romantic accoutrement of the writer

after each trip. In films where the sexual urge and the creative one are expressly linked, such as Shakespeare in Love (1998), The Pillow Book (1996) and The Libertine (2004), the link between writing and caress, ink and ejaculation, is explicit.

Typing is different. The fact that you wouldn't especially want someone typing on your body is somewhere within Truman



Touch of evil: 'The Shining'

Capote's snotty maxim about Jack Kerouac "not writing" but "typing". Typewriting introduces a separation between the writer and the written; it takes an improvisational flow and makes it a staccato beat. In Ray Enright's Ready, Willing and Able (1937), the happy tap-tap-tap of the typewriter blissfully takes over when words fail, Ruby Keeler and Lee Dixon launching into a dance atop a giant typewriter when the subjects of two typed love letters prove "too marvellous for words". (There's a Bollywood take in 1970's Bombay *Talkie.*) More often, however, the implicit partial autonomy of the typewriter has sinister overtones. In *The Naked Lunch* (1991), William Lee's Clark Nova becomes a monster; in Barton Fink(1991), the eponymous scribe is dismissed as a "tourist with a typewriter", his beloved Underwood machine standing in for all he has failed to do in life. (The insult echoes a line attributed to Jack Warner: "Actors? Schmucks. Writers? Schmucks with Underwoods.")

It is in adaptations of the fiction of Stephen King, however, that the typewriter habitually asserts itself as a malign force, or at least a portal to evil. In *The Shining* (1980) and *Stand* by Me (1986), Misery (1990) and Secret Window (2004), writing is a dangerous compulsion that releases bad impulses and awakens old ghosts. This can be read as a manifestation

of King's own discomfort around social class and intellectualism - the sense that his writeravatars are misplaced in a cerebral profession and due to be punished for their self-indulgence (as when Antoine's shrine to Balzac causes a literal conflagration in his home). On film, it can lend itself to other interpretations - see the contention, in the new documentary Room 237 (see review p.102) that Jack Torrance's use of a German typewriter in *The Shining* is Kubrick's clue that his film is a Holocaust metaphor. (A typewriter is also central in 1993's Schindler's List, close-ups on the hammers punching letters into paper emphasising the role played by cold bureaucracy and pragmatic decisionmaking in genocide and salvation alike.)

The notion of machines talking back is no longer creepy in itself; had Jack Torrance had a laptop, it might have informed him with a polite wiggly line that he seemed to be typing the same sentence over and over. Typewriters used by contemporary characters now indicate a certain retro romanticism, clung to by the likes of the dead-technology fetishists in *Obselidia* (2010) and the old-fashioned writer-protagonist of *Ruby Sparks* (2012). But the further we move from the physicality of writing, the more poignantly Antoine Doinel's struggles with a typewriter communicate the fraught effort to own and control the means of expression. §

DISPATCHES

TEMPLE OF DREAMS

The world's best film museums and institutes create shrines to the cinema that are as poetic and passionate as films themselves

By Mark Cousins

I'm sitting in the world's newest film institute and cinema building, the Eye in Amsterdam. The sun's setting behind the city. People have gathered on the building's steps to watch the dying of the day, like they do in the Campo in Siena.

Where the London Eye stands proud, like a penny on its edge, Amsterdam's Eye lies low, like a gecko, taking everything in. It's easy to take things in here, looking to the city panorama, which is getting more orange as I write, like the cyclorama in Hitchcock's Rope. It's hard not to think of film buildings around the world. The Museo Del Cine is about to open at the massive, renovated Cineteca in Mexico City. The BFI in London tried to make a new cinema building recently, as did Edinburgh's Centre of the Moving Image. The last I heard, Tehran closed down its movie museum, which was stuffed full of the prizes won by Kiarostami and his kith and kin. And, after decades of planning, it sounds like Los Angeles is finally gearing up to do a major museum of the movies. Tinseltown has long needed a temple.

But what sort of temple? What makes a good building to house cinemas, archives and film history? As day turns to night here in Amsterdam, I'm sure of one thing: the people who built the Chinese National Film Museum in Beijing, which opened in 2007, didn't have a scooby. Earlier this year, I walked for a few hours through the art district where Ai Wei Wei has his studios, to visit the museum. The place looms. It's as big as London's Tate Modern. Its doorway is five storeys high and star-shaped. Walking through it, you feel like an extra in a Cecil B. DeMille epic. Inside, such pomposity flattens to the under-imagination and conformity of an apparatchik. In a breathtaking rewrite of history, we're told that after the "crisis" of the Cultural Revolution, the great Mao rescued the film industry by restoring production. More banally, the exhibits reduce cinema to dull graphs and documents about technology and business, what a friend of mine decorously calls "flat shit". The Chinese museum captures neither the emotions of cinema nor its magic. It's prose, not poetry.

As I trudged around it, I wondered what Chris Marker would make of its lack of passion or poetry, which led me to recall the Chinese National Film Museum's polar opposite, the numinous, luminous Museo Nazionale del Cinema in Turin, the greatest movie building I've visited, if you discount the Eisenstein apartment in Moscow and the Tokyo sound stages where Ozu filmed some of his interiors. Housed in a 19th-century former synagogue, Alberto Barbera and his team have made a jewel of cinephilia, a sensory palazzo, a place of intellectual dazzle. They light Fellini's hat and scarf, a screenplay of *Citizen Kane* or a



Building blocks: the Eye in Amsterdam

tape recorder like the one in Coppola's *The Conversation* as if these objects are relics in a church. At regular intervals, the soaring dark cupola's scores of tiny windows open so that daylight streams in, as if storm clouds have just given way to the sun, as if someone just switched on arc lights: a transformation that reminds us that cinema is the art of light.

The Turin museum has "flat shit" on walls too (posters, photographs), and it's great, but in the internet age we can see such stuff, and read filmographies, in the comfort of our own homes. Digital means that museums are no longer about hoovering up facts but about coming to desire facts. They're in the seduction game, the appetite game. Compare Turin to Beijing and you see what cinema is, what David Thomson writes about in his great new book *The Big Screen*, what Serge Daney wrote about: intoxication, a longing for a world view, a formal emotional enchantment, a janus swithering between head and heart.

So can the new film museums and institutes learn from Turin, Beijing and the Eye? Given film's fatal attraction to reality and dreams, I'd love to see a movie museum in which, at the start, you have to choose whether to walk through the Lumière (reality) door and see the story of Nanook, Greed, Le Jour se lève, Italian neorealism, Maysles, Tsuchimoto, Shoah and Samira Makhmalbaf, or the Méliès (magic) door, leading to an enchanted pathway through Lotte Reiniger, Cocteau, The Wizard of Oz, Fellini, Hitchcock, Chytilovà, Lynch and Jodorowsky. There should, of course, be sneaky slip roads between the two paths. Or how about evoking *film noir* by the smell of mimosa and gunpowder and the click of a femme fatale's heels on night-time streets? And so traumatic was the McCarthy witch-hunt partition that museum visitors should be again asked to go through one of two doors: the blacklistee's or the blacklister's. That would evoke the crisis of those years.

None of which is to say that the "flat shit" shouldn't be there either — I was stopped in my tracks by an *Ordet* poster here in the Eye this afternoon. But what we are realising in the 21st century is that the original offline world's sensory, collective, haptic, kinaesthetic experiences are what we savour. It's the real presences of people and objects that excite — leafing through the screenplay for Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* in the Danish Film Archive two years ago made my heart race. In his Olympic opening ceremony, Danny Boyle made an emotional and ideasy dreamscape. That's what a new movie museum should be like. In other words, like a film. §



TWO SCREENS LOCATED IN CENTRAL LONDON PIONEERING ART HOUSE CINEMA FROM AROUND THE WORLD.



5 - 13 Oct

THE LEGEND OF KASPAR HAUSER (Davide Manuli, 95mins)

Surrealist Italian filmmaker Davide Manuli casts the equally maverick Vincent Gallo in two roles for a visually breath-taking re-working of the German fable.



From Fri 19 Oct

5 BROKEN CAMERAS (Emand Burnat and Guy Davidi, 94mins)

The tensions between Israel and Palestine take powerful form in this deeply personal, first-hand account of non-violent resistance in Bil'in, a village in the West Bank.



From 26 Oct

ELENA (Andrey Zvyagintsev, 109mins)

Winner of the Un Certain Regard Special Jury Prize at Cannes in 2011, *Elena* is a gripping, modern twist on the classic noir thriller.



From 2 Nov

KEEP THE LIGHTS ON (Ira Sachs, 101mins)

Keep the Lights On chronicles an emotionally and sexually charged journey of two men in New York City through love, friendship, and addiction.



From 6 Nov

ALPS (Yorgos Lanthimos, 93mins)

Directed by Yorgos Lanthimos (*Dogtooth*), *Alps* focuses on a club whose members are paid to take the place of a family's dead relative. A deeply strange and darkly comic look at the fictions we create.



From Fri 9 Nov

MOTHER'S MILK (Gerald Fox, 95mins)

Based on the award-winning novel by Cornish-born Edward St Aubyn, *Mother's Milk* is a powerful, moving yet also blackly humorous drama.



From 16 Nov

THE POOL (Chris Smith, 98mins)

A swimming pool in a fenced-in estate becomes the object of obsession and later inspiration for two street kids living in Goa, India. Directed by Chris Smith (*The Yes Men, American Movie*)

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MALKOVICH'S WELLINGTON



Being Arthur Wellesley: John Malkovich as the Duke in 'Lines of Wellington'

A star such as John Malkovich signifies his own presence more powerfully than that of the character he's meant to be playing

By Jonathan Romney



The accompanying still, from Valeria Sarmiento's new historical drama Lines of Wellington, shows John Malkovich playing the Duke of Wellington. Now,

that statement isn't quite as straightforward as it may seem. It's never a simple matter to say that a star is playing a role in a film: because they're instantly recognisable, stars signify their own presence before they signify a character. We invariably see the actor before we see the disguise that he or she more or less successfully disappears into.

But it's peculiarly problematic to state that John Malkovich plays Wellington. With his fastidious scowl on that bruiser's mug, Malkovich in Lines of Wellington doesn't facially resemble the Duke as seen in any known portrait; nor does he match the popular image of Wellington as a nobly cerebral strategist. Sarmiento's Wellington comes across as cantankerous, vain, somewhat selfmocking – in fact, as someone very like John Malkovich, or at least like the persistent screen persona the actor has created over the years.

This performer seems long ago to have rejected the tacit understanding by which actors conceal their own identity to adopt the camouflage of another; in this sense, he is the diametrical opposite of the chameleonic Meryl Streep, whose 'real' self is somehow understood to have left the building before the film even begins. Instead, the supposed self of Malkovich's characters usually yields to a more forceful and perverse identity – which we understand to be the actor's own. That's not to say that, as detractors would have it. Malkovich is always the same. Far from it: he can be an 18thcentury libertine, a US army general, a wildly accented Russian gambler or - in his recent

stage performance in *The Infernal Comedy* – an egotistical Austrian serial killer. What emerges in this paradoxical conjuncture of mutability and surprisingly consistent self-identity is, as often as not, the actor's own eccentric persona. He remains forever Malkovich, and he knows it: when I interviewed him on stage at the Barbican recently, he stated: "I am like Popeye the Sailor Man – I yam what I yam."

It's by no means a slight, then, if I compare him to a British performer whose brilliance is often misunderstood because of a similarly confounding combination of character actor's versatility and irreducible self. I'm talking about Kenneth Williams. He was the proverbial man of a thousand voices, yet each voice unmistakably resounded with the timbre of his own: he could play (on *Round the Horne*) a camp Soho theatrical, a gnarly-voiced folk singer, a seedy religious fanatic; (in the Carry On films) a would-be suave spymaster, a senior hospital surgeon, a whiskery western old-timer; or (on TV chat shows) a highly fluid version of his supposed 'true identity' as scholar, dandy and buffoon. But Williams was neither 'himself' nor any of the characters he purported to play; rather, he amplified his roles by filling their largely formulaic personas with the force of his own unique, instantly identifiable presence. That's exactly what Malkovich does with his characters: he doesn't so much play, for example, a movie director (in Manoel de Oliveira's I'm Going Home) as show us what such a director would be if infused with the essence of Malkovich.

When Kenneth Williams intones the deathless "Infamy! Infamy!" line in Carry On Cleo, we don't for a moment think we're seeing a plausible Julius Caesar, but neither are we just seeing (as when Sid James dons his toga) a Carry On actor in fancy dress. It's something more: this is Caesar as he would be if he behaved like Kenneth Williams. The same goes for Sarmiento's film: it doesn't give us John Malkovich playing the Duke of Wellington, but – if you like – the Duke of Wellington playing John Malkovich. 6

'Lines of Wellington' plays at the London Film Festival on 13, 16 & 19 October

TEN FILMS SET IN HOTELS

A list to celebrate this month's rerelease of Stanley Kubrick's The Shining, with its unforgettable Overlook Hotel...

Grand Hotel

(Edmund Goulding, 1932) Stories interweave in the titular establishment with an all-star cast including Greta Garbo and Joan Crawford.

Lost in Translation

(Sofia Coppola, 2003) Scarlett Johansson falls in with jaded movie star Bill Murray (right) while waiting for her photographer boyfriend at the Park Hyatt, Tokyo.



Hotel Monterey

(Chantal Akerman, 1972) Static camera set-ups give a slightly Lynchian mood to this portrait of a boho downtown New York hotel.

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel

(John Madden, 2011) Judi Dench, Maggie Smith and assorted OAPs head to Rajasthan in search of an affordable retirement.

Four Rooms

(Alison Anders, Alexandre Rockwell, Robert Rodriguez, Quentin Tarantino, 1995) New Year's Eve in a Hollywood hotel.



Barton Fink

(Joel Coen, 1991) Screenwriter John Turturro holes up in the dingy Hotel Earle, with insurance salesman John Goodman down the corridor.

(Ingmar Bergman, 1963) In an unnamed country, a little boy, his mother and aunt are adrift in a vast, near-empty hotel.

The Gay Divorcee

(Mark Sandrich, 1934) A ridiculously lavish Art Deco hotel, allegedly in Brighton, is the setting for this sprightly Fred and Ginger musical.



Dunston Checks In

(Ken Kwapis, 1996) An orang-utan causes havoc in Faye Dunaway's Majestic Hotel, to the chagrin of manager Jason Alexander.

Last Year in Marienbad

(Alain Resnais, 1961) While staying in a palatial hotel, Giorgio Albertazzi tries to convince fellow guest Delphine Sevrig (right) that they had an affair the previous year.



The Industry

DEVELOPMENT TALE

THE LONG WALK TO COLIN FIRTH



Aren't those Michael Caine's glasses?: Colin Firth in the remake of 'Gambit'

A remake of a Michael Caine heist caper took Hollywood producer Mike Lobell 15 years to get off the ground

By Charles Gant

At the tail end of 1966, a young American garment trader called Mike Lobell, travelling in Europe, was invited by friends to attend the London premiere of heist caper *Gambit*. Directed by Ronald Neame and starring Michael Caine and Shirley Maclaine, the film was not a hit with critics or audiences.

Three decades later, in the 1990s, Lobell was an established producer best known in Hollywood for his quirky comedies with director Andrew Bergman (*The Freshman*, *Honeymoon in Vegas*). Universal, where he had a first-look deal, asked if there were any properties in the studio's catalogue he'd consider for a remake. And although he hadn't given *Gambit* a second thought since seeing it all those years before, as he recalls now, "It came back to me clear as day, its charm and the concept of a dreamer with a perfect plan. Of course when he goes into action, it all goes awry. I felt because the original was known by so few, it was something worth pursuing."

Embarking on what would turn out to be a

15-year odyssey, Lobell first went after Aaron Sorkin to pen the remake. "He said, 'Look, I can't start right away. I have to finish these two pilots and hand them in, and then I'll get going," Lobell explains. The two TV pilots were *Sports Night* and *The West Wing.* "He had to back out. That was my first setback."

Lobell continues the story: "Time went by, and Universal asked if I would meet these three lovely English guys, producer Andy Paterson, writer Frank Cottrell Boyce and director Anand Tucker, and they were great. I said, 'OK, let's go.' They took a very bold step with it, and set the movie in Japan. It was an interesting script, but it just wasn't funny. For me, it didn't work. I liked the guys, but we decided to move on."

Hearing that the Coen brothers were available for a screenwriting assignment, Lobell pitched them *Gambit*, and they agreed. "I'll never forget it," says Lobell. "I opened the first page and it said, 'Alpine, Texas'. I got goosebumps – I knew I was in for a ride. The original movie had nothing to do with Texas or the United States. And I just loved the script.

"The first director we gave it to was Alexander Payne. He said he would like to do a little bit of work on it with his writing partner Jim Taylor. We had a great lunch. A week later he came to my house, and talked some more, and he wanted Reese Witherspoon to play the lead female role." The actress agreed. "A week later he

called me and said, 'Mike, I have bad news. I just don't want to do a movie that I haven't written."

Witherspoon was willing to stay onboard, as long as the producer could secure either Mike Nichols or Robert Altman. "Altman read the script, wanted to do it, loved Reese," Lobell recalls. "Universal were skeptical, but they agreed to meet with him – how could you not? And I was so excited, I can't tell you. Robert had a house in Malibu, but lived on the East Coast. He came out, the meeting was at 10 o'clock. I get a call from him at 7am, on the day, he says, 'Mike, I am absolutely going to disappoint you. I can't do it. I reread it on the plane and it's a fabulous script – it just isn't me. I don't know what I would bring to it, it's so...' When the Coen brothers write something, that's what it is. When he does a movie, he lets things happen, and this was a very structured script. And that was the end of Robert Altman. Mike Nichols didn't want to do it, so that was the end of Reese."

The luck worsened with the next twist of the saga, in 2003. "At that time," says Lobell, "Universal made a gigantic movie that was in post-production, called *The Cat in the Hat*, with Mike Myers. Bo Welch, the genius production designer, made his directing debut on it, and they suggested him to me. Bo and I became really great friends while he was cutting his movie, and we were going to put this together." A cast was assembled, including Colin Firth, Ben

THE NUMBERS: POLISH CINEMA IN THE UK

Kingsley and Jennifer Aniston. But then Welch's film opened. "I don't know how you do this with style and sympathy, because I really love Bo," says Lobell, "but Cat in the Hat wasn't just a miss - it was a *gigantic* business miss, and it started to dissolve Gambit. And at that point Universal decided they didn't want to do the movie."

Now outside the studio fold as an independent producer, Lobell embarked on what he calls "an amazing journey", successively partnering with four financiers. By the time of the third, Alcon Entertainment, Firth had departed, and Gerard Butler was in line for the role, with Richard LaGravenese (P.S. I Love You) to direct.

"LaGravenese says he wants to do a polish on the script," Lobell continues. "Well, the polish took a long time, and he gave me a script that wasn't the Coen brothers any more. The whole thing became a real exercise in futility. A couple of years went by after that, and I get

When the Coen brothers write something, that's what it is. When Altman does a movie, he lets things happen

a call from CAA. Everyone in the business knew the script. I'd been everywhere with it two or three times. Doug Liman was interested in it. This was three years ago. And in the meantime I got a call from Roeg Sutherland, son of Donald – he puts together a lot of the foreign sales for CAA. He said he found me two guys who wanted to finance the movie, with Far East backing." This company, Crime Scene, finally made the movie happen.

Liman had always been upfront that he had other projects in the offing, says Lobell: "But he said, 'If they don't go, and Gambit goes, I'll do Gambit.' It was getting muddled, I had waited a lot of years, and I wanted to get the movie made. And so at that point – I didn't tell the financiers – I called Michael Hoffman. Michael had directed a movie that Andy [Bergman] had rewritten called Soapdish years ago, and Andy liked Michael a lot." In the end, it came together quickly. Firth - who by then was back in the frame - met and approved Hoffman. Cameron Diaz then came aboard, giving a big boost to foreign pre-sales, and the cast was filled out with Alan Rickman, Stanley Tucci and Tom Courtenay.

Despite the challenges getting the film made, Lobell – now aged 71 – has put thoughts of retirement on hold, and is moving swiftly with a new script from long-time associate Bergman: A Film by Alan Stuart Eisner, with Robin Williams, Oliver Cooper (Project X) and original Gambit actress Shirley Maclaine attached.

"I thought I was going to stop and smell the roses, and I did for a while, but I always had Gambit lurking," Lobell concludes. "The making of the movie energised me so much, and then Andy's script came along - we're like brothers so here I go. I'll keep doing it until it's not fun." §

'Gambit' is released in the UK on 21 November, and will be reviewed in a future issue

By Charles Gant

The market for foreign-language films in the UK is primarily an arthouse one, with discerning audiences shrugging off the challenge of subtitles to see the best of world cinema, and most mainstream foreign comedies and action pictures failing to secure any distribution. But there are exceptions. Indian and Turkish mainstream films regularly play on UK multiplex screens, targeting specific local populations, and now Polish cinema has joined the frav.

Piotr Grzeskiewicz has been releasing films for the recently arrived Polish population since the start of 2011, achieving a commercial breakthrough with 'Battle of Warsaw 1920' last autumn, followed by action comedy 'Sztos 2' ('Scum 2'), released here as 'Polish Roulette'. Targeting an immigrant community that has been estimated around one million, Grzeskiewicz made an exclusive deal with the Cineworld chain, reaching Poles across the UK and Ireland. "There is no Polish ghetto," he explains. "The audience is geographically spread, and increasingly assimilated. It's also more selective than in Poland. It costs the same to see a Polish film as a Hollywood or British title, so you have to convince them each time that this is a good Polish film."

For Grzeskiewicz, the audience is changing. "Many of the Poles were very young when they started arriving in numbers in 2003 and 2004, but the age range is more diverse now," he points out. "Our audience is typically 25 to 40, but there's also a second generation

of Poles who came here with their families and grew up here. The majority of people liking our Facebook page for our new release 'You Are God' are aged 16 to 24."

The late-1990s-set 'You Are God' - which is based on the story of real-life Polish hiphop trio Paktofonika - is the latest success for Grzeskiewicz's distribution company Project London. Although not the biggest opening in gross terms - that honour belongs to 'Polish Roulette', with £160,000 from 40 sites - its debut of £97.000 from 21 cinemas represents the highest screen average ever achieved for a mainstream Polish film. 'You Are God' is the first Polish title to be released in Poland, the UK and Ireland on the same day.

Grzeskiewicz sees the film as the first of his company's releases with genuine crossover potential for the native English-speaking audience, thanks to its youth-culture subjectmatter - echoes of Anton Corbijn's 'Control' - and a filmmaking quality reflected in a trio of prizes (for actors and direction) at the Gdynia Film Festival. Such an outcome would be a boon for both Project London and Cineworld, since mainstream Polish films tend to burn through their audience much quicker than arthouse equivalents such as 'In Darkness' and 'Katyn', creating cinema runs that have been notably brief. An additional programming challenge has been sparse midweek attendance for these releases. "Poles in the UK typically work long hours in the week," explains Grzeskiewicz. "A trip to the cinema is likely to be seen as a weekend treat." §



Straight outta Katowice: Polish hip-hop movie 'You Are God' has opened strongly in the UK

POLISH FILMS AT UK BOX OFFICE

Film	Year	Gross
Polish Roulette	2012	£235,858
In Darkness	2012	£235,510
Battle of Warsaw 1920	2011	£185,199
Katyn	2009	£161,381
You Are God	2012	£97,209*
Warsaw Hangover	2012	£53,860
*gross after three days only		

A HAVEN FOR ART FILMS

Festival hits often struggle in the world of mainstream distribution. But perhaps there's a way they could be nurtured

By David Locke

Of all the film festivals that take place across the globe annually there are - to use a tennis analogy - five 'grand slams' in terms of their history, import and continuing value. As well as announcing new works and new talents, these festivals – Sundance, Berlin, Cannes, Venice and Toronto - are also markets in which sales agents, distributors and exhibitors converge, deals are done and rights, where available, are assigned.

The majority of films that appear in the UK have been purchased for distribution after screening at one of these festivals, though a good number will have been pre-bought at script stage and many more are already assigned to a studio. The BFI London Film Festival – important though it is as a barometer for UK appetites – has little value as a market, because any film of note will have been snapped up long before it reaches these shores.

Yet a positive screening at the LFF can clinch a decision or encourage the resolve to expand original plans for a release. It can lead to successes such as Carol Morley's *Dreams* of a Life and Andrew Haigh's Weekend, or a relative commercial failure, such as Ben Rivers's Two Years at Sea, whose theatrical release failed to build upon the excellent audience reaction it enjoyed at the 2011 festival.

What Two Years at Sea suggests is that there is a chasm between a festival screening and a screening in a commercial cinema setting. Rivers's film failed to connect when it was released into a competitive market just a few months after the 2011 LFF. Various factors can be called into mitigation, including the increasingly saturated marketplace, weak

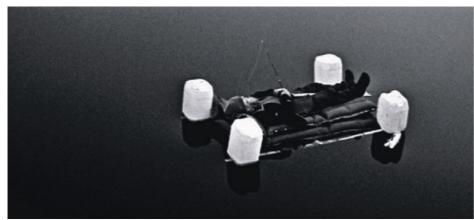
We need an initiative that allows films to screen without exposing them to rigorous commercial expectations

scheduling and the non-conventional narrative.

There is a perception, partly propagated by the organisers themselves, that festivals are bastions of purity, gallantly existing solely for the sake of film art. The reality, however, is that they run along much the same lines as a commercial cinema operation (only with more free alcohol), accepting into their programmes high-profile corporate sponsors and films that, though of lesser artistic value, allow economic sustainability and a guarantee of column inches. Stars sell tickets and bring marquee value at festivals, just as they do when they go on general release. A few highly visible screenings are essential for profitability and will often be used to offset the inclusion in the programme of riskier titles that may or may not find an approving cinema audience.

When it comes to Two Years at Sea, The Arbor, Las acacias, Snowtown, Samson & Delilah and other titles that constitute a commercial risk – but whose festival success suggests that they have a currency - surely there's room for an initiative that allows films to screen without exposing them to rigorous commercial expectations that many of them cannot possibly hope to fulfil? Where festivals do differ from standard exhibition practice is that films are pretty much presented on a relatively even keel. Once a 'niche' title reaches the general marketplace, however, it cannot hope to compete with the mainstream in terms of advertising spend and publicity, yet it will be judged over the same three-day box-office performance.

There once existed a touring programme of LFF and Edinburgh Film Festival titles that would make their way across the regions. Today, it's not only the regions that are starved of cinematic diversity. Surely, in this digital age, a similar scheme could be introduced that would allow non-festival goers the opportunity to enjoy some of the non-commercial riches either in their local cinema screens or in their homes via an on-demand service? This would enable a home-grown festival such as the LFF - which has long functioned as a kind of unofficial annual festival 'greatest hits' - to have an enduring year-round legacy and give a leg-up to films that lack box-office power or populist appeal in the form of event-type presentations and special screenings. §



Cast adrift: Ben Rivers's 'Two Years at Sea'

IN PRODUCTION

Roman Polanski shortly begins shooting on a French-language adaptation of David Ives's Broadway hit 'Venus in Fur', ahead of his previously announced historical thriller inspired by the Dreyfus Affair, being written by Robert Harris. The story revolves around a writer-director and an actress desperate for the lead role in his upcoming play based on the 19th-century erotic novel 'Venus in Furs'. Polanski's wife Emmanuelle Seigner is to star alongside Louis Garrel. Larry David is to star in a film he has also co-written for HBO entitled 'Clear History'. The film, which will be directed by Greg Mottola, has already attracted a cast including Jon Hamm, Philip Baker Hall, Kate Hudson, Eva Mendes, Michael Keaton and David's 'Curb Your Enthusiasm' co-star J.B. Smoove. David plays a man publicly humiliated for walking away from an electric car company after a petty argument with his boss. Soon the company is worth billions.



- Luca Guadagnino (above), the Italian director of 'I Am Love' starring Tilda Swinton, is reportedly to adapt James Ellroy's novel 'The Big Nowhere', the second part in Ellroy's 'LA Quartet', sitting between 'The Black Dahlia' and 'LA Confidential'. The news comes as it was announced that the rights to Ellroy's most recent novel 'Blood's a Rover' have been acquired by Vs Entertainment.
- Hossein Amini, the British-Iranian screenwriter who had a recent hit with 'Drive', is to step behind the camera for the first time with an adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's Crete-set novel 'The Two Faces of January'. The film will star Kirsten Dunst alongside Viggo Mortensen and Oscar Isaac.
- Stanley Kubrick of course left a number of unmade projects, and a couple of his lesser-known unmade screenplays are to be developed for television by Entertainment One. 'Downslope' was a US Civil War drama script adapted by Kubrick from a story by Shelby Foote, and 'God Fearing Man' concerns the true story of Canadian minister Herbert Emerson Wilson, who became a bank robber in America in the early 20th century.
- Clio Barnard is to follow her acclaimed 2010 film 'The Arbor' with a film entitled 'The Selfish Giant'. The project is to be produced by Tracy O'Riordan for Moonspun Films, with support by the BFI Film Fund.
- John Michael McDonagh is to follow 'The Guard' with 'Calvary', a dark comedy about a good priest tormented by members of his parish. Chris O'Dowd, Kelly Reilly and Aidan Gillen are lined up to star.

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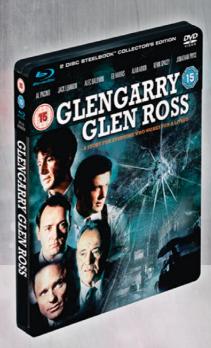
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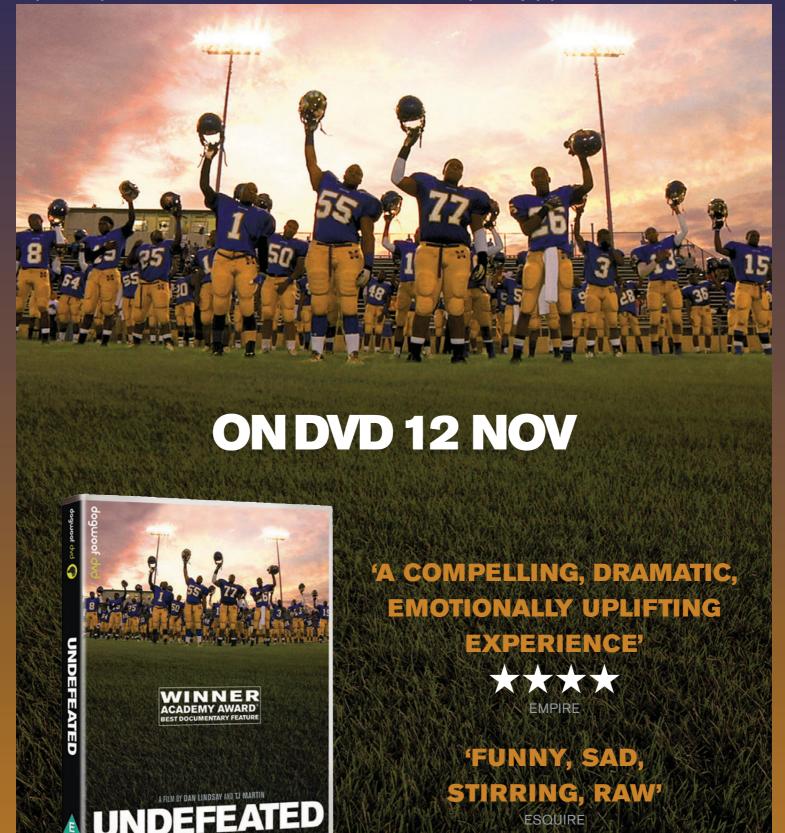
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MARCO MULLER

A spell in Cultural Revolutionera China helped launch the career of the renowned Italian 'festival-maker'

By Nick Roddick

I am just about to hook up with Marco Müller via Skype when a huge storm knocks out the power in the hills outside Rome, where he retreats at weekends. With Müller, who has programmed half a dozen major festivals over the past quarter of a century, drama of some kind is never far away. After high-profile and sometimes controversial spells in Turin, Pesaro, Rotterdam, Locarno and Venice, 2012 marks a new phase in Müller's career: as artistic director of the Rome Film Festival, an event that's well funded, well attended but still – six years after its launch – searching for an identity.

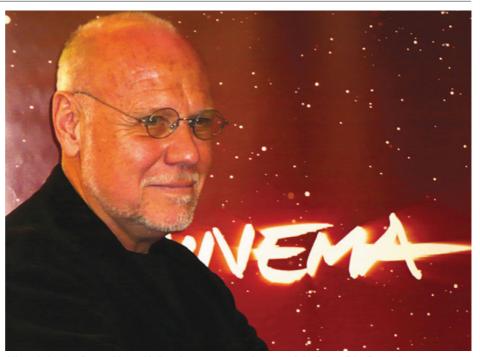
Chances are, Müller will give it that identity. There are several words for someone who programmes a film festival: artistic director, chief programmer, déléqué général... But Müller alone has appropriated the term 'festivalmaker'. "The first thing you have to do is build up a relationship with your audience," he tells me when the storm has cleared, the power has come back on and he has checked that there is no damage to his 7,000-film library. "But at the same time you have to wait for your audience to catch up with you."

Catching up with Müller has never been easy. Born in Rome in 1953 to an Italo-Swiss father and an Italo-Greek-Brazilian mother, he was among the first batch of exchange students to be sent to China after the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1975. When he got there, the academy he was supposed to attend had been shut down and he was sent to Manchuria. "I had lots of time to myself, so I went to the movies," he recalls. "Romanian costume epics, political dramas from Albania, North Korean melodramas... Then, after the Gang of Four fell, lots of the older films came back to life and I began to follow the trail."

Returning to Italy in 1977, he worked on a programme of 'new Chinese cinema' assembled by the Chinese government for the Pesaro Film Festival, but it struck him as decidedly unrepresentative. "I had seen so many titles which were not in the official selection and I thought, "This is not right," he recalls. "So I decided to invent my own festival of Chinese cinema. It was called 'Electric Shadows' [the elements in the Chinese ideogram for 'cinema'] and we showed more than 130 films. Everyone was there - the Soviet papers, everybody."

That was in Turin in 1981. It was the obvious start of Müller's career as a 'festival-maker' with, as always, two aims: expanding audience horizons and ensuring maximum publicity. Or, as he puts it, "being a macro film-event manufacturer: you have to find the right space for art, and it has to be one you can defend."

After Turin, Müller returned to Pesaro, combining programming with teaching, broadcasting and some production work. Then in 1989 he was appointed artistic director in



All roads lead to Rome: Marco Müller, the new artistic director of the Rome Film Festival

Rotterdam after the death of that festival's founder, Hubert Bals. It was not an entirely happy period – he stayed there for only two years, during which, however, he helped set up the Hubert Bals Fund, an annual pot of production support money that has been instrumental in getting films from the likes of Wang Bing, Sergei Loznitsa and Apichatpong Weerasethakul onto the festival circuit. But as - in his words - "a Latin alone in the far north", he never felt at home in Rotterdam. One day he found himself in front of a bookshop whose window display was devoted to Italian literature – and whose owner had seen fit to supplement the books with packets of macaroni. "I said, 'That's it: time to go back to macaroni land!"

In fact, Müller's destination was Locarno, in the Italian-speaking Swiss canton of Ticino. He ran its festival from 1992 to 2000, setting up a Bals Fund clone in the form of the Montecinemaverità Foundation and also heading up Fabrica Cinema, which in its four years of life helped produce films by Aleksandr Sokurov, Samira Makhmalbaf and Danis Tanovic, among others. "The relationship [between festivals and] the industry is something that you have to learn," Müller insists. "And you can't ignore what happens to a film after the festival ends. You have to enhance the market value of a film or you have failed."

Müller was at Venice from 2004 to 2011 - a very long tenure by the standards of that fractious festival. During this time, he is credited by his successor Alberto Barbera (who, thanks to the political game of musical chairs

There are several words for a programmer of festivals; Müller alone has appropriated the term 'festival-maker'

that is Venice, had also been his predecessor) with having restored "the international credibility and visibility of the festival". Rome, set up under the charismatic Mayor Walter Veltroni in a more or less unsubtle bid to replace Venice as Italy's leading festival, is a whole new challenge. Müller calls it "a rebirth".

He moved there late last year after Venice declined to renew his contract and, for his first edition, has cut the size of the event's international competition to 15 titles, while adding a new section called CinemaXXI for artists' films, and a much-needed panorama of new Italian movies. But, in a move that will come as no surprise to those who recognise that Müller is both cinephile and showman, the red-carpet event for the local audience will be as prominent and glitzy as ever.

"Rome," he says, "is a big city with several groups of viewers all totally different from one another." All will be catered for, he says, promising 60 world premieres and adding – in a passing thrust at the cinematic puritans he encountered in both Rotterdam and Locarno – "I can cope with every kind of audience except the ideological one." Crowdpleasers are as much a part of festival life as arthouse fare, he says, proudly noting that the European premiere of The Full Monty was held in Locarno's Piazza Grande under his watch.

Rome's four-day market, The Business Street, will likewise continue, with Müller as attuned to the demands of 'the market' as he is to the artists' films of CinemaXXI. "A festival programme has to cover the spectrum of all modes of producing," he says, especially now the digital era is transforming every aspect of the business. "Not all the films we show will be distributed theatrically in the future. but they will all find their own channels."



This year's Rome Film Festival runs from 9 to 17 November

Festivals

VENICE

SOMETHING IN THE AIR

Byzantine wranglings about the final prizes took the shine off an otherwise scintillating Venice Film Festival

By Nick James

It's a pity that such a thrilling edition as this year's Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica in Venice should have ended with a tarnishing of the prizes. According to several reports, the jury originally wanted to give all three main prizes – the Golden Lion for Best Film, the Silver Lion for Best Director and the Coppa Volpi for Best Actor - to Paul Thomas Anderson's The Master, with costars Philip Seymour Hoffman and Joaquin Phoenix sharing the Coppa. But the fine print of the rules precluded this, and so a re-meet determined that the Golden Lion should go instead to Kim Kiduk's *Pieta* – so as not to damage the integrity of the other two prizes. In my view *The Master* earned all three, and Kim's delight must have been dented by his film being honoured as an afterthought.

Comparison of the two would do the South Korean film few favours, but Pieta was the most enthusiastically applauded film at press screenings - and it did exhibit the most extreme version of the festival's recurring theme: children abandoned by their mothers. The grown-up child in question is Kangdo (Lee Jungjin), a cartoon psychopath who forces the poverty-stricken inhabitants of Seoul's Cheonggyecheon district of small machine shops to pay extortionate interest on insurance policies. When they can't pay, Kangdo maims them so that the policies pay off. When a woman (played by the excellent Cho Minsoo) arrives at his tiny apartment claiming to be his mother, he does abominable things to her – which she tolerates until he's convinced she's authentic. But with that acknowledgement his limited world starts to fall apart. A sensationalist psychodrama that uses dismemberment and mangling as a kind of punctuation to divide fragmentary scenes of Freudian overdrive, Pieta eschews all subtlety and makes little sense, but it's memorably vivid.

A lonesome angry soul in search of an anchor is also at the heart of **The Master**. As the film opens, Freddie Quell (Joaquin Phoenix) is in the navy serving in the Pacific campaign during World War II. (An overhead shot of the swirling ocean is followed by a close-up of Quell in what looks like a landing craft – a shot that seems explicitly to link the film to Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line*.) Once Quell's discharged, he becomes a post-traumatic drifter whose only talents seem to be for portrait photography and creative alcoholic concoctions. On the run from murderously vengeful co-workers, he slips aboard a cruise ship in port and the next day, at sea, is introduced to Lancaster



Golden Lion winner: Kim Kiduk's 'Pieta'

Dodd (Philip Seymour Hoffman), a man brimming with theories about how people can find their better inner selves. The film has all been Phoenix's up to this point, and we've got to know his lip-curling disbelief, wincing hypersensitivity, simian stance and explosive temper. Now we're presented with a different brand of dysfunction: a red-faced, mesmeric huckster of commanding certainty, suppressed glee and winning avuncularity. That first meeting seeds several more as Dodd's cult 'The Cause' follows the money of the needy and credulous, wherever it may be hoarded. The question is whether Dodd and The Cause can tame and contain the loyal but

VENICE TOP TEN

- 1. The Master Paul Thomas Anderson
- 2. Something in the Air Olivier Assayas
- 3. Paradise: Faith Ulrich Seidl
- 4. Wadjda Haifaa Al Mansour
- 5. Stories We Tell Sarah Polley
- 6. Betrayal Kirill Serebrennikov
- 7. Penance Kurosawa Kiyoshi
- 8. Pieta Kim Kiduk
- 9. Bad 25 Spike Lee
- 10. The Iceman Ariel Vromen



'Stories We Tell'

unpredictable Quell. The film's compendium of high-impact set-piece duels between cod psychology and method instinct in American 1950s period settings is fascinating because the talk feels so vital and vivid in the sometimes slurry mouths of these incredible actors.

The Master, then, can dominate all comers just as effectively as its titular subject. Happily, Venice had more strong films of a different kind, but there was one notably weak one of similar 'great statement' ambition. Watching Terrence Malick's **To the Wonder** was like seeing a great high-jumper fail time and time again to get anywhere near his record height. That the film's voiceover mutterings about love can be compared indistinguishably with Stephenie Meyer's dialogue from Twilight (see http://www.vulture.com/2012/09/who-wrote-itmalick-or-meyer.html) might just be snobbery (I suspect C.S. Lewis's ultra-Christian The Four Loves might be in there somewhere too); but the sheer banality of the film's whole aesthetic assault is itself a wonder straight out of National Geographic magazine. Malick fails to make us care about the people he's chosen to exemplify God's creation – they're apt only if God is addicted to fashion and interiors magazines. Ben Affleck plays Neil, a say-little hunk who brings Parisian beauty Olga Kurylenko and her daughter out to a Midwest housing project that looks like the present-day version of the 1950s homesteads we saw in *The Tree of Life*. Here the schoolgirl and the girl-woman endlessly pirouette through the tall grass, bathed in the orange rays of Oklahoma's seemingly endless magic hour. There's an oblique sub-theme concerning Javier Bardem as a lonely priest, but it's even more ignorable than Sean Penn's cameo as the present-day architect in *The Tree of Life*.

There were other disappointments: heavy on the cheese, Ramin Bahrani's wheat-farmer saga At Any Price can't survive Dennis Quaid's pop-eyed gurning in the paterfamilias role. Bernard Rose's latest Tolstoy-based moral tale Boxing Day takes an amateur casualist approach to two men in car (Danny Huston and Matthew Jacobs) visiting vacant palatial homes in wintertime Colorado – and is as dull as that sounds. Takeshi Kitano's latest vakuza movie Outrage Beyond feels like an endless board meeting with angry men either shouting or grovelling. And Valeria Sarmiento's historical pageant about Portuguese suffering in the Napoleonic wars, Lines of Wellington (Linhas de Wellington), sadly has none of the wit and surrealism we might have expected from what was originally a Raúl Ruiz project. But these were none too significant in a programme that otherwise had flair and variety to burn.

Take, for instance, Sarah Polley's documentary **Stories We Tell**. On the one hand, it's a deeply personal archaeological dig into her family history, handled with impressive control and composure; on the other, it's a meditation on how we talk about our



Force of nature: Joaquin Phoenix, above, shared the best actor prize at Venice with his co-star in 'The Master', Philip Seymour Hoffman

lives, and what an enormous impact the structure of stories can have on other people. At first we think we're watching a paean to the director's actress mother Diane, who died when her daughter was 11; then a portrait of a marriage, when the family joke among the children (siblings and half-siblings) was that Sarah must have been fathered by someone else. This joke's unwitting truth turns out – after the unfolding of many layers – to be the true subject of the film. It's the most gripping, revelatory and thought-provoking autobiographical film I've seen in some time.

Two more documentary-based films offered a brilliant contrast – and a slender connection. Kinshasa Kids is a somewhat shambolic but fascinating redemptive tale made with some of the thousands of outcast street kids who have been branded 'witches' in the Congo. Clearly made on the fly by Belgium's Marc-Henri Wajnberg, the film restages the odd jobs, scams, thievery and musical opportunities they need to survive in the jerry-built slums of the city. Some of the images astonish as much as the kids' lifestyle, and a scene where they wander into an orchestral performance of Mozart's Sanctus has a strange power. The eight kids include Rachel Mwanza - who already won the Silver Bear in Berlin this year for her part in War Witch, a film she's shot since this one – and a cheeky Michael Jackson impersonator... And therein lies the connection to Spike Lee's Bad 25, which celebrates the making of Michael Jackson's Bad album much as many 'great album' docs have done, though it's sharper and more inspirational than the average in demonstrating Jackson's immense talents and exploring the supplementary abilities of those who worked with him on his 'Quincysential' three albums with Quincy Jones (the first two of which, or course, were Off the Wall and Thriller). When dealing with Jackson's death, Lee overdoes the montage of tears, but otherwise you can't help but feel the thrill of his belief in Jackson's extraordinary professionalism in song, dance and business.

Belief is also the matter of Paradise: Faith (Paradies: Glaube), the second part of Ulrich Seidl's Paradise trilogy. Seidl regular Maria Hofstätter plays Anna Maria, the sister of the sex tourist in Paradise: Love, who has become an extreme form of Catholic zealot, doorstepping immigrants to show them a statue of the 'Wandering Virgin' to which they can pray



'Bad 25



Street-fighting years: Olivier Assayas revisits the spirit of 1968 in 'Something in the Air'

for redemption. More impressively rigorous even than Love, Faith is a persuasive portrait of someone unshakeable in her self-belief. Not even the return of her demanding, wheelchairbound Muslim husband can unsettle her from her path of crucifix-stroking and selfflagellation, but the dark comedy inherent in their clashes had me laughing when I oughtn't.

The open, breezy immediacy of Olivier Assayas's Something in the Air (Après Mai) took me by surprise. I thought I'd had my fill of French films set post-1968 – the obsession with that moment seems to me one of the restraints that keep French cinema shackled to past attitudes. But this authentic and affectionate evocation of the late 1960s and early 70s, as seen through the eyes of young art student Gilles (Clement Metayer), shows off the contrast of activism and hedonism to much greater effect than that achieved, say, by Philippe Garrel in Regular Lovers (2005). Rarely selfindulgent, Assayas's film leaves the audience

'Something in the Air' leaves the audience to make up its own mind about the allure of a sex and narcotics-driven utopia



'Kinshasa Kids

to make up its own mind as much about the actions of the anarchist students as about the allure of a sex and narcotics-driven utopia.

There were also two significant new directing talents on show. The first hour of Kirill Serebrennikov's **Betrayal** (*Izmena*) dazzled as a brilliantly choreographed attempt to take an unnamed cuckolded man and woman (respectively Dejan Lilic and Franziska Petri) and turn them into adulterers themselves, cheating on second spouses. One of many notable scenes has the man confessing murder to a severe, near-silent woman police detective the look of lofty disdain in her eyes is priceless. The film eventually founders on too many grandstanding Hitchcockian flourishes, but the director certainly knows how to impress.

A more modest achievement that didn't put a step wrong was Haifaa Al Mansour's Wadjda, a clear-eyed portrait of a winsome pre-teen girl growing up in Saudi Arabia who desperately wants to own a bicycle so she can race the boy next door, even though girls in that country aren't supposed to ride bikes. Said to be the first feature ever made by a Saudi woman, this is a shining debut, with a grasp of politics that's perfectly judged.

'The Master' is released in the UK on 2 November



TORONTO

THE TORONNO EFFECT



Deep cover: in 'Argo' Ben Affleck plays Tony Mendez, who posed as a film producer to get Americans out of revolutionary Iran

Two very different documentaries packed a bigger punch than 'big-statement' features at this year's Toronto Film Festival

By Tom Charity

"'Toronno' – they don't pronounce the 't'," Ben Affleck coaches an American hostage on how to pass for Canadian in Argo. The Toronno crowd loved him for it, and this true tall tale about a fake movie – used as cover to 'exfiltrate' six US embassy workers from revolutionary Iran in 1980 – was quickly anointed the buzz movie at this year's Toronto International Film Festival. (Though in the end it was pipped to the Audience Award by David O. Russell's engagingly upbeat celebration of shared dysfunction, Silver Linings Playbook.) Argo is an expertly crafted suspense thriller enlivened by a series of in-jokes about the movie business (more catnip to the festival audience). "You could teach a rhesus monkey to direct in a day," affirms make-up artist John Goodman, and indeed Mr Affleck makes it look all too easy.

Within days of its premiere, this satisfying middlebrow thriller was upstaged by the killing of US ambassador Chris Stevens in Libya and protests across the Middle East sparked by another fake film (at least, from the point of view of the actors who claimed they were duped and redubbed by its director): *Innocence of Muslims*. In terms of geopolitical impact,

it's hard to think of any recent movie that can compare – and all we've seen are a few YouTube clips. At least *Argo* gives audiences a smidgeon of historical context and acknowledges the West's shameful role in installing the Shah in the first place. (Incidentally, it also tells us that 25 per cent of Iranian cinema under the Shah was given over to pornography. Who knew?)

As in Venice, the must-sees this year were The Master and To the Wonder, and broadly speaking they generated the same love-it and leave-it responses respectively. But reactions to the other big, big movie here were all over the map: the world premiere of Cloud Atlas, a lavish adaptation of David Mitchell's century-hopping novel by Tom Tykwer and the Wachowski siblings. An illustration of what one character calls "eternal recurrence", Cloud Atlas gives us six stories all at once (the movie is far more fragmented than the book), inviting us to pick up on correspondences in casting - half-a-dozen actors play three or four roles apiece – and thematic motifs. Progressive in its politics, the film is bold, visually splendid and dramatically ham-fisted, a mindboggling effort in ways both good and bad.

At least you couldn't accuse the Wachowskis and Tykwer of playing safe. The same goes for veteran *enfant terrible* (he's 39 now) Harmony Korine. If **Spring Breakers** can be called his first mainstream movie, it's still very much on his own terms: sleazy, scandalous and provocative. Charting the misadventures of four suburban teenage girls (including

TORONTO TOP TEN

- 1. The Master Paul Thomas Anderson
- 2. The Act of Killing Joshua Oppenheimer
- 3. Something in the Air Olivier Assayas
- 4. Spring Breakers Harmony Korine
- 5. Frances Ha Noah Baumbach
- **6. Lines of Wellington** Valeria Sarmiento
- The End of Time Peter Mettler
 Stories We Tell Sarah Polley
- 6. Stories we reli Saran Polley
- 9. Silver Linings Playbook David O. Russell
- 10. Museum Hours Jem Cohen



'Museum Hours'







Rites of passage: Harmony Korine's 'Spring Breakers'

Disney popettes Selena Gomez, Ashley Benson and Vanessa Hudgens, as well as the director's wife Rachel Korine), this is a kind of cautionary fairytale, albeit a deeply ambivalent one. As you might expect from the writer of Kids, Korine revels in the amoral hedonism of this modern American rite of passage, a grinding, horny high of drugs, beer and sex that's supposed to be a relief valve from the tame tedium of college or high school, but which quickly lands the girls in jail.

The movie is hijacked in its second half by James Franco's silver-toothed serpent Alien, a drug dealer who puts up bail and serenades them with Britney Spears. At first it's disconcerting that Korine repeats so many lines, images and even scenes throughout the film, but there is method to his madness - the movie steers away from conventional narrative (three of the four girls are barely distinguishable) and instead morphs into a hallucinogenic cine-poem, an echo chamber in which certain phrases, sights and sounds (most prominently, the pumping of a shotgun) loop into a recurring hot-pink nightmare.

At the opposite end of the visual spectrum, the best Canadian fiction film I saw was Kazik Radwanski's **Tower**, which had played earlier in Locarno (alongside quite a few more TIFF selections). A low-budget character piece about a prematurely middle-aged aspiring animator still living with his parents, it's a nicely judged study of congenital irresolution; doubtless a tough sell outside the festival circuit, but enough to mark the writerdirector as someone to keep tabs on.

In the non-fiction category, Peter Mettler's **The End of Time** is a fascinating meditation on something that defines life itself, yet defies words and images. A visual essayist first and foremost, Mettler takes us inside the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland, drops in on the last homesteader on a South Pacific island that's slowly being carpeted by hot

An illustration of "eternal recurrence", 'Cloud Atlas' is a mind-boggling effort, in ways both good and bad

lava ("It's like watching a slow movie," he says), and swings by Detroit, a dying city that used to be the engine room of the American century. This is time well spent, and a lovely companion piece to Nostalgia for the Light.

Saving the best for last, Joshua Oppenheimer's extraordinary The Act of Killing arrived bearing plaudits from Errol Morris and Werner Herzog, as well as a citation from the Human Rights Commission of Indonesia. This too is a story about time and repetition, and also the chronicle of a 'fake' or 'dream' film of a sort. Reminiscent in some ways of accounts of Cambodian mass killings such as Enemies of the People and S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine, it's singular in its insistently cinematic lens.

Oppenheimer focuses on a self-described "movie-theatre gangster", Anwar Congo, a ticket tout in Northern Sumatra in the mid-1960s, and an avowed fan of Hollywood gangster

films, John Wayne and Elvis Presley. When the military and the Right seized control in the 1965 coup, they turned to Anwar and his friends to purge the country of communists. He casually explains how they would go straight from the movies across the street to the little terrace that was their favoured kangaroo court, how they would take inspiration from cinema in methods of execution – and how they murdered hundreds with Elvis still ringing in their ears.

Encouraged by Oppenheimer to collaborate on a movie of their glory days (though they scarcely need persuading), the unperturbed assassins throw themselves into the task, cowriting, directing and acting in vignettes they fondly imagine will be a heroic souvenir for friends, family and the nation they helped to build. Needless to say, these films within the film reveal a very different truth to the one they imagined – as even Anwar ultimately cannot ignore. What's most fascinating about The Act of Killing is how long he clings to his delusion, and how he keeps faith with the filmmaking even as he starts to choke on the bile of his own guilt.

'Argo' is released in the UK on 7 November, and 'Cloud Atlas' on 22 February 2013



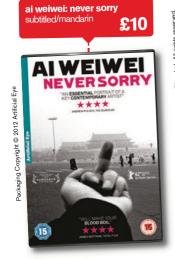
'Tower'



'The Act of Killing











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COMPETITIONS

COLOUR FILMS IN BRITAIN: FIVE COPIES TO BE WON

The coming of colour was a controversial topic for British filmmakers and enthusiasts. While it was greeted by some as an exciting development, others were deeply concerned. Sarah Street traces its history in British cinema in this new book from BFI Palgrave. The use of colour in a range of films including *The Open Road, Blithe Spirit, This Happy Breed* and *The Red Shoes* are analysed and the book is accompanied by colourful film stills.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

Q. Which was the first of David Lean's Technicolor films?

- a. Summertime
- b. Blithe Spirit
- c. This Happy Breed



ALFRED HITCHCOCK: THREE COPIES OF MASTERPIECE COLLECTION ON BLU-RAY

A classic set of Hitchcock films makes its way to Blu-ray courtesy of Universal Pictures (UK). Digitally restored and presented in high-definition, Alfred Hitchcock: The Masterpiece Collection brings together 14 films, (13 never before seen on Blu-ray). The set contains Saboteur, Shadow of a Doubt, Rope, Marnie and Vertigo, with bonus material including making-of featurettes and deleted scenes.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

Q. In which Hitchcock film do two friends strangle a classmate and then hold a party in his honour?

- a. Saboteur
- b. Shadow of a Doubt
- c. Rope



THE LIFE AND DEATH OF COLONEL BLIMP: FIVE RESTORATION EDITIONS TO GIVE AWAY

Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's 1943 Technicolor epic has been lovingly remastered and released in a dual-format edition by ITV Studios Home Entertainment. Detailing the trials and tribulations of British officer, Clive Candy (Roger Livesey), the story follows his army career which takes him through the Boer War plus the two World Wars. Extras on this dual set include a 25-minute documentary, a Martin Scorsese restoration piece and four exclusive art cards.

To be in with a chance of winning a steelbook edition, simply answer the following question:

Q. Which of the three characters played by Deborah Kerr is Colonel Blimp's driver?

- a. Edith Hunter
- b. Barbara Wynne
- c. Johnny Cannon



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To tie in with its forthcoming exhibition, the V&A publishes *Hollywood Costume*, a landmark book which celebrates the costume designer's contribution to 100 years of Hollywood. Some of the finest and most eclectic costumes from the Golden Age of Hollywood are juxtaposed with more contemporary classics such

as *The Artist, Atonement, Sherlock Holmes* and *The Dark Knight Rises*. Highlights include specially commissioned interviews with Meryl Streep, Robert De Niro and Tim Burton.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

Q. Who was the costume designer for 'The Hours'?

- a. Alexandra Byrne b. Joanna Johnston
- c. Ann Roth

(Hollywood Costume, sponsored by Harry Winston, opens at the V&A on 20 October 2012. Tickets are available from vam.ac.uk)

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Email your answer, name and address, putting either 'Hitchcock Blu-ray Collection', 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp', 'Colour Films in Britain book', or 'Hollywood Costume Book' in the subject heading, to s&scompetition@bfi.org.uk Or send a postcard with your answer to either 'Hitchcock Blu-ray competition', 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp competition', 'Colour Films in Britain book competition', or 'Hollywood Costume Book competition' at Sight & Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London with the subject of the subject

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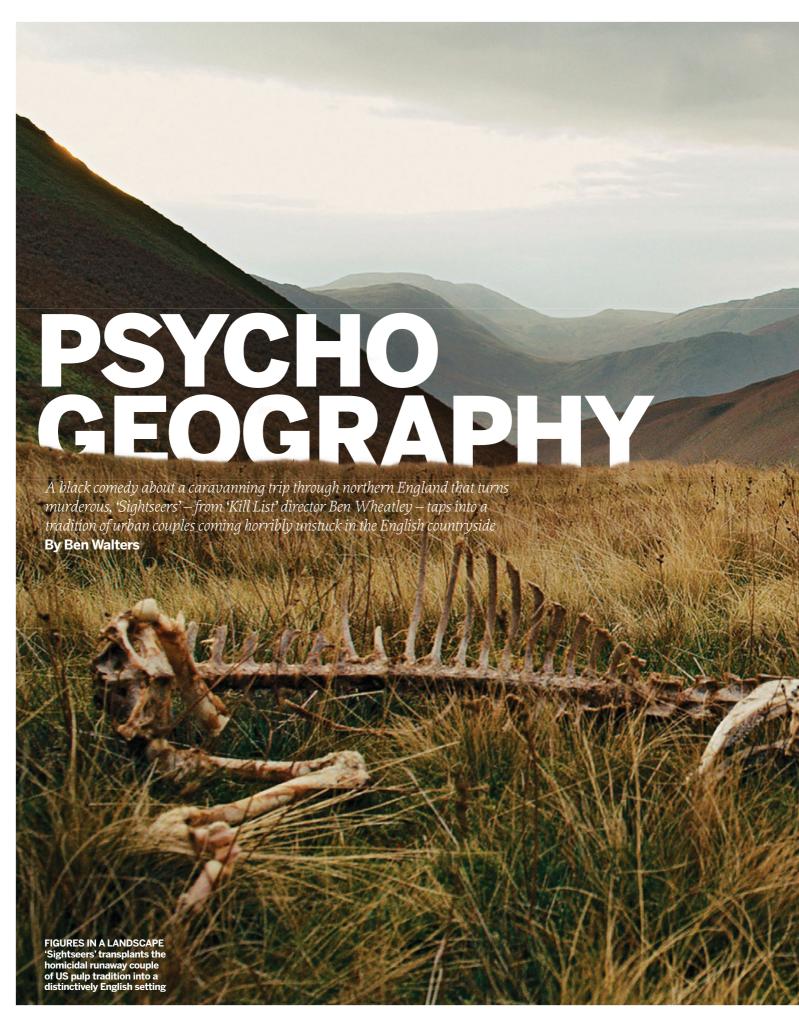
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tape in the hope of developing a TV series.

"We wanted to do it as a sitcom, a bit like *Terry and June*, but with killing," Oram says. The idea, he reports, was judged "too dark" for TV, but it was seen as having feature potential. Edgar Wright, in whose *Hot Fuzz* Lowe had appeared, forwarded the short to producer Nira Park, whose Big Talk had backed *Black Books* and *Spaced* on TV and *Shaun of the Dead, Hot Fuzz* and *Attack the Block* in cinemas. Park also knew Wheatley, who – though now best known for the combination of character-based social realism, unadorned violence and black comedy he brought to the low-budget features *Down Terrace* (2009) and *Kill List* (2011) – also has a TV comedy pedigree, having directed episodes of *Modern Toss* and *Ideal* and, earlier, written for Armando Iannucci's *Time Trumpet*.

"Ben had made *Down Terrace* at that point, though not *Kill List*, and it seemed like an obvious fit thematically," Lowe says. "He's very interested in showing violence and how that implicates the audience. That took the film to the next level – made it more cinematic. We started thinking of the characters as being more serious: they had to feel like real people with a real history and a real psychology and real reasons."

Wheatley still took inspiration from TV techniques, however. "A lot of the process that I have now has come from looking at how Iannucci worked on *The Thick of It,*" the director says. "That improv style, jumping backwards and forwards between takes, doing takes on the script and takes off the script. It's also in Cassavetes and Leigh."

Not that he's keen to invite comparisons with Mike Leigh. Despite numerous connections between *Nuts in May* and *Sightseers* – extensive exterior shooting; an overbearing man wrong-footed by his initially infantile partner's growing confidence; subtexts engaging with class, economics and authority; the use of branches as weaponry – Wheatley maintains he only saw Leigh's film two weeks before shooting started on *Sightseers*. "I went, 'Ooh, OK. Oh, fuck.' We changed a lot of stuff to make sure it wasn't too much like it. There was a bit more of them looking at timetables and stuff like that that gently disappeared."

The splendour of our countryside is often overlooked. "It's totally mind-blowing how expansive and beautiful England is, and no one realises it because we're English and closed off," says Oram. "When we start the film, Chris and Tina are in a very stifling suburban environment, and just 20 miles down the MI they're in this epic land-scape." Chris and Tina's initial motivation is to escape the disappointing strictures of everyday life. "It seemed to suit their characters," Oram says. "It's an American idea: 'We're in control of our own destiny, going out there in our covered wagon, pushing the boundaries.' But it's a caravan, really, isn't it?" Gonks, hen parties and National Trust bores are never far away.

Such deflation comes as standard in the bathetic-bucolic mode, in which characters often have pretensions to post-Romantic notions of fruitfully communing with nature. Chris fancies himself as something of a latter-day Wordsworth, needing only time in the country and the attentions of his muse to create his "oeuvre", but we swiftly realise he is incompetent to express himself in any way other than murder — and ludicrously pettyminded murder at that, failing even to live up to the Hollywood template of the revenge-killing spree. "It's an

American idea, but done in an English way," Oram says, "i.e. shit. Tarantino does it and it's really cool – and then we come along and we're wearing cagoules and being Brummies."

The steady accretion of low-level practical irritants and hazards is another familiar tack. "When you're out there," notes Wheatley, "you realise that 200 years ago it would have been misery being in any of these places and you would have just died. If you're having to live in these environments, it's tough, it's harsh, it's not fun at all. It's only recently we can blithely bomb about the place and go, 'Oh, yeah, it's great,' and then go back to the city."

ULTIMATE HOLIDAY

As a romance with a body count, *Sightseers* follows the likes of *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Badlands*, *The Honeymoon Killers* and *Natural Born Killers*. Distinguished from such American forebears by its very English privileging of irony over iconoclasm and blunt-force trauma over gunfire, the film nevertheless shares with them an appreciation of the liberating cocktail of naivety and sociopathy with which such sprees are fuelled – a sense of murder as the ultimate holiday. "It's coming out of that contract with society," Wheatley suggests, "that idea that everything we've been sold is a lie – which is where Chris is coming from. And Tina's got nothing: her world is just a house she's trying to get out from. If he'd had another hobby, she'd probably have gone along with that."

Both *Down Terrace* and *Kill List* also juxtapose the English countryside with human brutality in stories focused on couples for whom murder is a shared pursuit – modern Macbeths with less troubled consciences. These are not, Wheatley says, motifs that he consciously repeats. And, while acknowledging that "it does paint quite a dark picture of me", he suspects they are rooted in his own happy domestic life with partner Amy Jump, who had a writing credit on *Kill List* and takes writing and editing credits here.

"The couples thing, I think, comes from Amy and I being a couple: we have a couple's perspective and we've been together since we were 16, so it's always been that," he says. "A lot of the drama in [our] films comes from couples being strong together rather than couples breaking apart. People said a lot about *Kill List* that the couple were in the process of breaking up, but it was never meant to

"Tarantino does it and it's really cool — and then we come along and we're wearing cagoules and being Brummies" Steve Oram





be like that. They were just shouty – an aggressive couple who negotiated between themselves in a heightened way. [In cinema in general] you often see the drama of the betrayal and the split, but mostly [for us] it's couples working towards a goal and achieving it." The goal generally being murder. "Yeah, but that's just drama, isn't it?"

Like his improvisational shooting style, Wheatley credits his gruesome but relatively naturalistic approach to violence to TV influences, notably dramas of the 1970s and 80s such as *Threads* and *Scum*. "It's designed to make you upset rather than give you an excuse as a viewer to think it's OK," he insists. "It's from the Alan Clarke school where you show it and you go, 'This is horrible.' *Scum*still scares me now in a way that modern stuff doesn't."

Sightseers sometimes suffers from a certain jarring of these comic and realist sensibilities: some of the broader comedy beats, using outlandish props or gag-based dialogue, threaten to render gorier moments glib. "We tried to really fight against that," Wheatley says. "The original short film was very broad and it was bringing it back from that towards a reality that's more within the world of the films I've made before. But if you steer the ship towards comedy, away from horror or drama, then these things happen—everything's aiming towards a joke. And not everything is funny in life."

While *Sightseers* focuses on Chris's pseudo-Romantic yearnings, the film does contain elements of the deeper English past, the rich, loamy hinterland that also seeps through the cracks in *Down Terrace* and *Kill List*, even if the cult elements of *Kill List* lack the thought-through plausibility of those found in, say, *The Wicker Man* or *Rosemary's Baby*. As *Sightseers* progresses, a sense of unaccountability and wildness grows.

"We realised how beautiful the landscape could be, from little diddy houses and fields to larger, darker, more tragic scapes – viaducts and stone circles, monolithic and ominous," says Lowe. "As the landscape gets wilder, you feel you're going into the past, into a time before cities

and civilisation. The physical journey became the journey of the film, from sweet and harmless to the heart of British darkness. Before we learned all these manners and polite restraint, we were smashing each other over the head with stones."

Wheatley introduces dashes of psychedelia and what he calls a "Roeg-y kind of parallel-action weirdness" — sequences in which rhythmic, associative editing meld elements of synchronicity, memory and dream in fantasias of lust and death aimed at linking Chris and Tina to a semi-mythical past. "I see that weird schism of modern and ancient at the same time," he says of everyday life, "and that comes through in the work. As I get older I notice it more. When you're a kid, everything seems certain and you believe the status quo is totally inflexible, but you only need to be cogent for ten years and you see that political systems repeat, history repeats, everything's repeating all the time. You think, 'I'm probably the same as myself from 200 years ago or a thousand years ago."

It shouldn't, therefore, come as a surprise to learn that Wheatley's next project is a period piece that seems primed to offer a distillation of his concerns with history, landscape, magic, violence and restrictive circumstances: set during the Civil War, A Field in England sees a group of soldiers mysteriously trapped in a field with apparently supernatural qualities. He calls it "a prequel to all the films" he has made so far.

It wouldn't be cricket to wrap up without touching on a perennial matter of interest when it comes to the English countryside. "People get put off by the weather," Lowe says. "We tried to make a virtue of that. It could help you with your acting having sleet in your face. But it was made easy for us, in a sense, because if you're wearing proper camping gear it's actually quite comfortable." When dealing death on ancient earth, a good cagoule goes a long way.

1

'Sightseers' is released in the UK on 30 November, and will be reviewed in the next issue

MAKING A BREAK
Chris (Steve Oram) and
Tina (Alice Lowe) in
'Sightseers', above, recall
Candice-Marie (Alison
Steadman) and Keith (Roger
Sloman), below, filming
'Nuts in May' with director
Mike Leigh, in woolly hat

BOMB CULTURE

The year of the Cuban Missile Crisis and CND protests here in the UK, 1962 was a pivotal time for the young Sally Potter, then just entering her teens. Fifty years on, the writer-director has revisited the era and the passions of adolescent friendship in her new feature 'Ginger & Rosa'

By Sophie Mayer

Sally Potter's new film *Ginger & Rosa* focuses its gaze on the 17-year-old best friends of the title, born to mothers in adjoining beds on the day the US bombed Hiroshima. Facing the global threat of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Ginger (Elle Fanning) seeks to follow her father — a conscientious objector during World War II — by taking to the streets with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; Rosa (Alice Englert), meanwhile, wants to find true love before the world ends. They meet the world and each other with the particular explosive intensity of adolescent feeling.

As Potter points out, teenagers and the missile crisis are a natural combination. "Adolescence is transitional," she points out. "There was a very popular song of the era by Helen Shapiro, 'Don't Treat Me Like a Child', which expresses the overriding desire of girls to be grown-up. And 1962 is really before our conception of the 60s, yet it's beyond the 50s. It's almost like an adolescence of the decade — a transitional point. The Cuban Missile Crisis was a moment when people felt that the world could — if somebody put their finger on a button — blow up tomorrow. And female adolescence: it's a dynamite time."

The film's intensity of sensation also comes from the filmmaker's own memories of growing up in London. "I went back and looked at that wonderful period of British writing around the early 60s," she recalls. "Features like *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *The Pumpkin Eater*, but also documentaries from the Free Cinema movement." Making a virtue of economic necessity on a five-week shoot, Potter predominantly used East London locations near her production company Adventure Pictures. "It was a local film," she explains. "The tenement area [where Rosa lives] is in Arnold Circus. It's unchanged; all we did was hang up some washing. The bombsite [where Ginger and Rosa hang out] is a waste ground we found on a foot slog, influenced by my memories of playing on bombsites as a kid in London."

Ginger & Rosa doesn't so much revisit 1960s kitchensink realism as reinvent it. This marks a shift for Potter, who is known for the reflexivity of her films. But here, she insists, the emphasis was on one word: "Real. We wanted everything to look and to feel real. Of course it's a fiction, totally constructed, but the goal was to open a door that people could step through into a completely believable world without any self-conscious formalism." There's no non-diegetic music, with the focus instead on the presence of music in the characters' lives through record players, jukeboxes and live performance — in-

cluding a stunning scene in which Ginger catches her mother Natalie (Christina Hendricks) in the cold, empty living room, waiting up for her husband and singing the Gershwin song 'The Man I Love', accompanying herself on the accordion. As viewers of *Mad Men* may remember, Hendricks plays the instrument, and Potter says she "wanted to use the skills of the performers, and fill those musical moments with great significance". The director herself is a composer, singer and choreographer, whose films are known for their musical sensibility.

Potter praises DP Robbie Ryan's gift for "very free, handheld work with idiosyncratic ways of looking at light", which freed her to bring the performances to the fore. Visually, the film foregrounds Ginger's point of view – Potter insists that during the shoot there was "one principle we stuck to: never to shoot anything Ginger couldn't see, or that couldn't be in her field of awareness". Yet at the same time, it's an ensemble film, with striking cameo performances from Annette Bening, Oliver Platt and Timothy Spall, who form a quasi-Greek chorus of family friends advising and listening to Ginger. This culminates in the film's climactic confrontation, the largest dialogue scene Potter has ever filmed. "It was technically demanding shooting nine-minute-long takes of the whole scene over and over again," she admits. "But I held in my head a memory - although I didn't actually look at it again of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?: of people baring themselves. I wanted to make it in this very bare environment, so nothing could be hidden."

Creating space for the scene – and for the film's complex web of relationships – influenced Potter's choice of format. "It's the first time I've worked with CinemaScope," she says. "The frame's width is two squares, so you have duality built into it. It's a compositional format that allows, inherently, for relationship." Many of the scenes are duologues – as the title suggests: the film begins by emphasising Ginger and Rosa's inseparability as they share cigarettes, bathtubs and even an attempt at a kiss, before moving on to explore their differences.

Ginger also finds herself in debates with each of her parents as she tries to define herself. She sides with her father, left-wing academic Roland (Alessandro Nivola), who challenges her to autonomous thought and ethical responsibility, even as he asks her to lie about his relationship with Rosa. "There's nothing that Roland says that I disagree with," reflects Potter.

Of Hendricks's character Natalie, who gave up painting to become a mother, Potter says: "She is



DAWNING OF THE 60s Teenagers Ginger (Elle Fanning, right) and Rosa (Alice Englert, left) are at the centre of the new film by Sally Potter, below





part of a lost generation of women, trapped in the 50s. This alienation that's happened with Ginger's mother is a tragedy. Just at the very end you get a glimpse that something else might happen next" — as Thelonious Monk's version of 'The Man I Love' plays over the end credits, suggesting a rapprochement between Natalie's female-voiced blues and the instrumental jazz Roland and Ginger listen to.

The subtly reincorporated song extends from Ginger's final action, as she re-evaluates all her relationships in a poem. Potter has her own memories of being a young poet. "Poems are the perfect poor form," she says, "and teenage girls don't have much money as a rule – certainly not those from Ginger's background. All you need is a piece of paper and a pencil! I love watching very young people begin to find a voice. It's not very often that one sees very young people taken seriously as nascent artists, and given respect." (In her own case, Potter says, her filmmaking career was kickstarted by a family friend who loaned her a cine-camera as a teenager.)

Anti-war activism runs similarly deep in Potter's personal history. She reminisces about being taken as a child on 'Ban the Bomb' marches. One such march, recreated as a dramatic action sequence in the film, was

filmed at Greenham Common, where Potter herself was among the peace protesters in the early 1980s. This was not without its ironies, as Potter explains: "I was one of the people lining up around the base – and suddenly, 30 years later, I'm being given the key to the gates and being shown where the missiles were." With the police shown kettling CND marchers in the film, 1962 and 2012 come together, giving the film a startling immediacy.

Potter's recent experience at the nearby Occupy London camps, and her friendship with a new generation of climate-change activists, pays off in a scene that brings together the immediate threat of nuclear war and what she calls the "slow catastrophe" of climate change. Hearing Kennedy's radio address about the Cuban Missile Crisis, Ginger flees to the neglected playing field she once shared with Rosa. Alone and overwhelmed, she flings herself onto the ground, making a snow angel. Reaching her arm towards the lens, she grasps a handful of icy grass and mud. This small, austere yet vibrant sign is the perfect metaphor for the film itself, and for its plea that "everything matters, and nothing is innocent of our gaze".

1

'Ginger & Rosa' is released in the UK on 19 October, and is reviewed on page 88

1962 is really before our conception of the 60s, yet it's beyond the 50s. It's almost like an adolescence of the decade





Showing at The BFI London Film Festival **Gritty and intense dramas** about existential dilemmas are the stock-in-trade of Jacques Audiard. The son of a hugely prolific screenwriter (Michel Audiard), his films have concentrated on stories with complex political and psycho-

logical elements, all handled with great intelligence and panache. It's as if the director has always been wary of being labelled a mere *metteur en scène* in the country where the auteur is still king. But after a succession of brilliantly constructed, visually thrilling and movingly authentic works of cinema – *Regarde les hommes tomber* (1993), *A Self-Made Hero (Un héros très discret*, 1995), *Read My Lips (Sur mes lèvres*, 2001), *The Beat That My Heart Skipped (De battre mon coeur s'est arrêté*, 2005) and the hugely successful *A Prophet (Un prophète*, 2009) – Audiard has turned with confidence to a more commercial set of themes in his new film *Rust and Bone (De rouille et d'os)*.

A brief post-nightclub encounter between Stéphanie (Marion Cotillard), an orca trainer who's blind drunk, and Ali (Matthias Schoenaerts), a street boxer doubling as a bouncer, means nothing until later, when Stéphanie has lost her legs in an attack by one of the orcas. After some weeks trying to come to terms with her disability, she calls Ali. He has his own troubles raising his young son while doing all sorts of casual jobs, but he seems unfazed by her condition; totally relaxed, he offers her sex whenever she wants it, without any demands of his own. A bond grows between them that will, however, be sorely tested.

Rust and Bone has a genuine charismatic movie star in Cotillard and a tremendous new physical talent in Schoenaerts. Its combination of disability and hard-won romance is of a kind that often makes for Oscar bait, and it strives to be in touch with the new Europe of poverty and deprivation. As such, it's a different proposition from the more arthouse-oriented films Audiard is best known for, while the film's origins in two separate stories by the Canadian author Craig Davidson give the film a noticeably more episodic feel.

Thomas Dawson: What struck you most about Craig Davidson's short-story collection?

Jacques Audiard: Before A Prophet, I read the Davidson anthology and the stories really had an impact on me. Later, when I was working on the screenplay of A Prophet, I forgot about them, but when I had finished that, I was talking to my co-writer Thomas Bidegain, who'd also read them. At the beginning we thought about adapting three stories: the one with the orca whale ['Rocket Ride'], the one about the boxer ['The Pugilist at Rest'] and one about a fighting dog. In the end we only adapted [the first] two, and mixed them together. I didn't want to do a portmanteau film, with one story following another.

TD: Jean Renoir said something like: "What interests me in adaptation isn't the possibility of revealing the original in a film version, but the reaction of a film-maker to the original work."

JA: What's important is what questions the literary text poses. And then I like to use all the means and techniques of a different medium – cinema – to try to respond to those questions. I don't believe you should be trying to find equivalences to the literary text.

TD: You've said that you prefer titles that are slightly abstract to ones that are like injunctions to the viewer. What appealed to you about the title 'Rust and Bone'? JA: It's a much better title in English than in French. It has a real direct strength. When you say *De rouille et d'os* in French, it sounds more like Latin, some-

thing like Cicero's De Natura Deorum. I thought of calling it in French *Un gout de rouille et d'os* – a taste or a flavour of rust and bone – but that's too long."

TD: It's a real mix of genres: melodrama and Dardennestyle realism, plus a fairytale quality - and it's a love story too. Did you relish having so many approaches at your disposal?

JA: It's primarily a melodrama. The principal character of the film is love, in many states and many forms. When I was writing it, I was thinking a lot of a type of cinema I adore: American films by Tod Browning starring Lon Chaney [such as 1925's *The Unholy Three* and 1927's *The Unknown*]. They made a sort of expressionist cinema that speaks about the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s [and the films often featured physical disability]. I wanted to try to find a form of melodrama that could talk about today's economic crisis, in which the setting of a Marineland would be like a circus.

TD: My initial response to 'Rust and Bone' was that it was like a Dardenne film made with Scorsese's cinematic flourishes.

JA: It's bizarre. I adore the Dardennes, and I share their co-producer, but they weren't a conscious influence. Over the last ten years at the cinema, if you show a hardup man with a child, you think of the Dardennes. And if you show somebody in a wheelchair, you think of The Diving Bell and the Butterfly. I was thinking of Browning and Chaney and how the children flee in [Charles Laughton's 1955] The Night of the Hunter, which you can also talk about as a love story.

TD: Why the combination of an international star -Marion Cotillard - and a relative unknown, the Belgian actor Matthias Schoenaerts?

JA: I wanted to work with Marion ever since I saw her in La Vie en rose. At the beginning, I was leaning towards using a non-professional in the lead male role of Ali the boxer. I did casting sessions at gyms and boxing clubs and I met some terrific individuals. If I'd chosen a nonprofessional, I would have had to work a lot with them to reassure myself and to make sure they were not too overwhelmed by the filming experience. I abandoned that strategy and started looking for a professional actor. My casting director Richard Rousseau showed me a Belgian film, Bullhead, starring Matthias. He's a very, very good actor; he has classical training in the theatre. He's very intelligent and a pleasure to work with. He has a very particular quality which is very hard to define but it's something I've found with other Belgian actors like Olivier Gourmet, who I used in Read My Lips. They

always seem to be very present in their roles, very physical. I tend to find that most young French actors aren't naturally like that. Also, I really liked the idea of Marion playing someone her age, somebody who's 35 or 36.

TD: Many of your films concern people who exist on the margins of mainstream society. What makes these people so interesting to you?

JA: Cinema allows me to go to places I don't know about. I use the cinema like people take a plane. When I made Regarde les hommes tomber, what interested me was asking, "What's a masculine friend-



The principal character of the film is love, in many states and many forms

SHE AIN'T HEAVY After Stéphanie loses her legs, she bonds with Ali (Matthias Schoenaerts. below), who seems unfazed by her condition

ship? What is latent homosexuality in a relationship between two men?" As a director, I have the opportunity to learn things about people and feelings. When I made AProphet, I had never been to prison. I am the son of a bourgeois family. I have not experienced a life of suffering like the main character in that film. It's a life I know nothing about. I've never lived in a wheelchair like Marion Cotillard's character in *Rust and Bone*. If I look at my own history as a cinephile, cinema taught me about things. When I was 15-year-old schoolboy, My Night with Maud taught me how men behave with women. For me, the cinema is best at conveying subjective experiences, unlike television.

TD: Light and shadow seem to be important visual motifs in 'Rust and Bone'.

JA: What was to our advantage was that we were shooting in Antibes and Cannes with a digital Red camera. It really brought out the contrasts between the natural light of the south and how we lit the interiors. It meant all the images were dramatic. There is a split between light and shadow in the film for the characters as well, who – with the camera – objectively move from darkness into light.

TD: What was it like shooting with real whales?

JA: Well, it was certainly my first time filming orca whales. It's the thing we most prepared for because we had a very limited time to film in Marineland [in Antibes]. Marion spent a week preparing with the whales: she wasn't afraid at all – she was very courageous. We used four or five cameras to cover multiple angles.

TD: How did you come up with your musical choices? JA: It was very difficult. In all aspects of making the film, we were worried that we were either doing too much or not enough. I had a lot of conversations with my regular composer Alexandre Desplat. I didn't want the music to amplify things too much, but I didn't want there to be silence either. It was a real puzzle. A pop song like Katy Perry's 'Firework' you could talk about in inverted commas as being 'vulgar', but at the same time there's a lyricism in the balcony scene we use it in, where Marion is alone in the sunshine in a wheelchair and she is practising the hand gestures with which she communicated with the whales. It was Marion's idea to use the song.

TD: I've read that John Huston's 'Fat City' (1972) is one of your favourite films. Was it an influence?

JA: I love that whole late period of John Huston. Fat City, with a very young Jeff Bridges and Stacy Keach, is a sublime film, one of great simplicity and modesty. The ending, when the camera pans around the room of old men, is so opaque. And the film is just 90 minutes long – today, if somebody made a film like that, it would last over two hours. When I was an editor, we called films like that

huit-bobines ['eight reels'].

TD: You began in film as an editor. One of your first credits was working on Polanski's 'The Tenant' in 1976.

> **JA:** Yes. I worked as an assistant editor for five or six years. I learned a lot about how films are constructed. My knowledge of editing really helped me in the writing process.



'Rust and Bone' is released in the UK on 2 November, and is reviewed on page 103

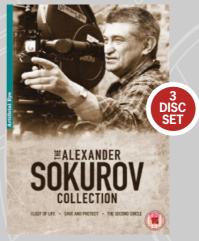
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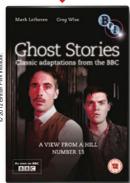
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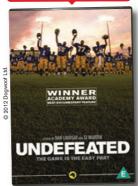


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SEOUL SURVIVOR

The grand old man of South Korean cinema, Im Kwontaek has directed over 100 films in a career that has spanned half a century – and held up a mirror to the changes in his country since the end of the Korean War

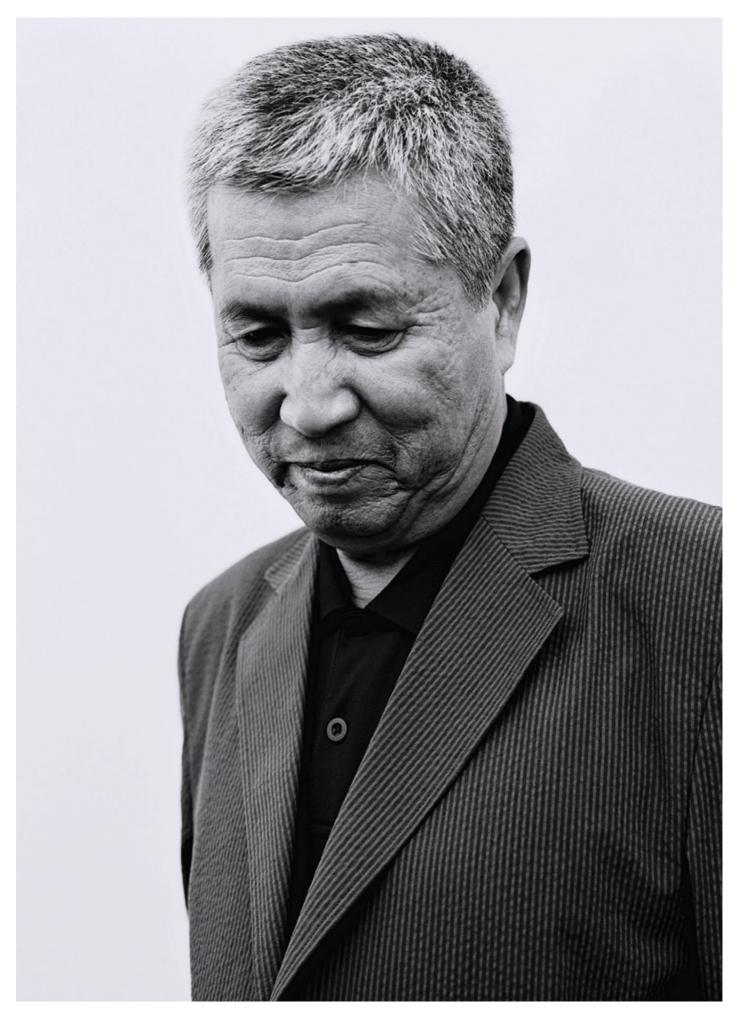
By Tony Rayns

PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT Made in 1981, 'Mandala', above, by the South Korean director Im Kwontaek, right, is one of the best films ever made about Buddhism **No film by Im Kwontaek** made it into the recent *Sight &* Sound Top 100. Several might have done, most notably his 1981 masterpiece *Mandala*, one of the best movies ever made about Buddhism and certainly the nearest cinema has ever come to Hermann Hesse's great novel Narziss and Goldmund. (The book is the definitive account of asceticism and debauchery, the Apollonian and the Dionysian.) Other possibles include Seopyeonje (1993), in which itinerant folk-singers struggle between life and living for their art (it really is up there with *The* Red Shoes), and his Cannes prizewinner Drunk on Women and Poetry (Chihwaseon, 2002), which imagines the riotous life story of a 19th-century painter in obliquely autobiographical terms. The list could go on, but the sad fact is that nowhere near enough people outside Korea have seen these films to vote for them.

The core problem is no doubt that most of us in the West know little or nothing of Korea's modern history. It's impossible to understand Korea's artists without knowing the context in which they've worked – so let's sketch it. The country was annexed by Japan as a colony in 1910. Japanese rule lasted until the end of World War II; Japan built some useful infrastructure but did its best to obliterate Korean identity and culture. The Russians and Americans 'supervised' North and South Korea respectively in the late 1940s. The Korean War started in 1950 (the newly communist Chinese replaced the USSR as backers of the North) and lasted three years; the truce remains fragile to this day. South Korea's first president Syngman Rhee (aka Lee Seungman) was forced out of office by public protests in 1960, and a succession of military presidents turned the country into a virtual police state for most of the following 33 years, cracking down hard on anything - such as labour-union activity - which smacked of leftism. The US Army stayed in the country after the Korean War, and it's still there now.

The Park Chunghee dictatorship lasted from 1961 to 1979; the Chun Doohwan dictatorship lasted only seven years in the 1980s, but stripped the country of almost all civil liberties and human rights. The massacre of unarmed civilian protestors on the streets of Gwangju in May 1980 traumatised the nation (much as the Tiananmen Square massacre was to do in China nine years later) and radicalised an entire generation of young people. Civilian rule returned with the election of Kim Youngsam as president in 1993. Liberties and rights were restored, censorship was greatly relaxed – and cinema unexpectedly led the way in an ultra-rapid modernisation. The domestic film industry was deregulated almost overnight and all but a few of the old government-crony film companies closed down. World cinema, most of it previously blocked, suddenly arrived on Korean screens and was avidly consumed as both a window on foreign countries and a measure of what Korean films needed to match. The first international film festival took place in Busan in 1996; soon, every Korean city wanted one – including Pyongyang in the North. The magazine Cine 21 (published by the Guardian-like newspaper Hangyoreh Shinmun) became for a few years the country's leading forum for general intellectual debate.

The transformation of South Korea was just beginning 18 years ago when Im Kwontaek came to the ICA in London with four of his features. Korean cinema was still all but unknown in the West, although Im's films had won prizes in Venice, Berlin and Moscow. He was flanked at the ICA by a group of younger directors – Jang Sunwoo, Lee Myungse, Park Kwangsu and Kim Uiseok, the last now chairman of the Korean Film Council –





In 'Gilsoddeum', a wealthy bourgeoise locates a man who may or may not be her son — only to conclude that the class gap between them is too wide to bridge

who were working to build a genuinely new Korean cinema. Im stood somewhat apart from the younger guys, partly because the Confucian tradition of age-hierarchy remains strong in Korea, but also because Im was conscious that he represented the film culture which the others wanted to sweep away.

Like everyone of his generation who had lived through 33 years of military dictatorships, Im must initially have doubted the durability of the new freedoms. But his caution had deeper roots. He came from a leftist family (his father fought as a pro-communist guerrilla on the mountains of Korea's south-west), and so he'd spent his first 30 years in the film industry covering his tracks. Debuting in 1962, he became a prolific director of genre quickies, including his share of 'national policy' (ie anti-communist) movies. He recalls that the military governments imposed a 15-day shooting limit on all productions, and that directors were monitored to make sure they didn't film too many takes. The first sign that he wasn't too happy in this job came in 1973, when he produced and directed a 'realist' film of his own choice: Weeds (Jabcho), on the plight of a widow. The film was a flop, and he didn't repeat the experiment; it's now lost, so we'll never know if or how it prefigured his later work. By the late 1970s,

though, he was successful and well-established enough to start demanding greater control of the films he made for other producers.

1980 seems to have been his breakthrough year, and it's probably not coincidental that Im's reinvention of his career coincided with a brief period of liberalism in the government. Choi Gyuha's ten-month presidency (it followed the assassination of Park Chunghee by members of his own guard in October 1979) saw the release of many political prisoners and promises of genuine political reform. Choi's administration was brought down after the Gwangju massacre, and things soon got very much worse again under Chun Doohwan. But in those ten months Im made one of his favourite films, *Pursuit of Death (Jjak-ko*, 1980), and planned the adaptation of Kim Songdong's novel *Mandala*, which he released in 1981 and once described to me as "my first palpable success as a serious director".

This slow-release of a directorial personality makes Im Kwontaek the last example anywhere in the world of a director who came up through the ranks of a repressive studio system, gradually found his 'voice' while churning out genre quickies and then managed the transition to the status of a conscious auteur with some aplomb. Obviously his story has parallels with Hollywood directors like John Ford and Frank Borzage, both of whom were marked by their encounter with Murnau at Fox in the late 1920s, or with a British director like Michael Powell.

But Im's case is rather different, precisely because he is Korean. He was born (in 1934) in a colonised country, lived through a massively destructive civil war, and then worked under a series of totalitarian governments which would have blacklisted him – or worse – if he'd let his family-leftist background show. Not surprisingly, the Korean experience is his major theme, and some Korean critics wax mystical in relating his films to such concepts as han (endemic Korean grief/resentment) and hyo (the Confucian code of respect to parents and ancestors). That strikes me as a kind of special pleading, the Korean equivalent of Japan's *nihonjinron*, the ludicrous pseudo-science of 'Japanese uniqueness'. What's so good about Im Kwontaek at his best is that he deals with the specifics of his culture and history without falling back on nationalist bombast: he makes 'Koreanness' intelligible to anyone.

Pursuit of Death is a fine example of his approach. (It's the earliest title in October's tribute at the BFI Southbank and the ICA.) It's set in a prison-like 'rehabilitation centre', where two destitute old men meet by chance – having been mortal enemies all their adult lives. Song Giyeol is an ex-cop and fanatical anti-communist; Baek Gongsan, known as as Jjak-ko, is a former communist guerrilla guilty of war crimes during the Korean War. Song blames Jjak-ko for costing him his job on the force, and immediately denounces him. Baek denies everything (he has a new identity) and tries to poison Song with mercury scraped from the back of a mirror. The grudge-match is played out to a surprisingly elegiac conclusion, but the film's distinction lies as much in its characterisations as in its tone – and in its remarkable flashback structure. Both protagonists are unheroic and defeated in their old age, but the wily Jjak-ko, who gave up the fight long ago, is vastly more sympathetic than the crazed and selfregarding Song. The contours of their feud are explored

in a web of flashbacks, which at one point includes a flashback-within-a-flashback and at another cunningly wrongfoots the viewer by suggesting that a flashback is Jjak-ko's, only to reveal at the end that it's Song's. All of this makes the film's 'Big House' clichés seem much less generic, and finesses the sense that Korea's long-running conflict between Left and Right has run out of road. Seeing it now, you wonder what Korean audiences made of it in the year of the Gwangju massacre.

Five years later Im released Gilsoddeum (named after a town that's now in North Korea), which anchors a portrait of the changing society of the mid-1980s in documentary footage from a recent TV campaign to reunite families torn apart in the Korean War. A wealthy bourgeoise in Busan is inspired by the images she sees on TV to look for the son she bore during a wartime romance in Gilsoddeum. She locates a middle-aged man who may or may not be her son – only to conclude that the class gap between them is too wide to bridge. The film doesn't just refuse a sentimental happy ending, it challenges the very assumptions of the TV show which was its point of departure. The frame of reference is specifically Korean, but the upending of melodrama conventions is not.

VANISHING TRADITIONS

Only after the political changes of 1993 and the relaxation of censorship was Im able to deal with the Korean War itself in a non-propagandist way and he chose, interestingly, to adapt a controversial novel about a pre-echo of the war: The Taebaek Mountains (Taebaek Sanmaek, 1994) details the communist take-over of two southwestern towns in 1948, and the US-led government's resort to fascistic militias to crush them. It's a story which resonates with Im's own family history. The film, staged on an epic scale, takes the premise of Pursuit of Death to its limit, showing both warring ideologies as inhumane or

twisted and 'ordinary' people as collateral damage.

Kim Youngsam turned out to be the first of three Korean presidents associated with opposition to the military rule of previous decades. South Korea did change, and the Korean film industry changed with it – producing such directors as Bong Joonho, Hong Sangsoo and indie maverick Kim Kiduk (see Venice Film Festival report, p.22). Im Kwontaek found himself the only veteran of the old film industry left standing. The last two decades have seen him turn away from 'political' issues to a focus on the country's vanishing cultural traditions, such as pansori folk-song, Buddhist ceremonies and traditional handicrafts. At the same time, his reliance on the codes and conventions of melodrama has waned; the later films often have innovative and daring structures. His visual style has become more lyrical and more open to bravura gestures like the celebrated six-minute take in Seopyeonje, which captures the fleeting happiness of the pansori master and his two disciples.

Cinema may well be slipping away too fast for the world to catch up with careers like Im Kwontaek's, but the Korean Film Archive's initiative in restoring Pursuit of Death and the sublime Mandala – both will be included in a four-DVD set due out at the end of the year – at least provides a chance to right past wrongs. Mandala and its female counterpart Come, Come, Come Upward (Aje Aje Bara-aje, 1989) both suggest that immersion in crime, sex and gluttony is not a barrier to enlightenment but may in fact offer a path to the Buddha. After a long career beset by censorship and political pressures, Im Kwontaek could no doubt endorse the lesson: whatever it takes.



A season of films by Im Kwontaek plays from 22 October to 3 November at BFI Southbank, London; his films are also screening this month at the ICA. The director will be in conversation at both venues







CULTURAL TRADITIONS Clockwise from bottom left: 'Come, Come, Come Upward', 'Seopyeonje', 'The Taebaek Mountains' Opposite: 'Gilsoddeum'

THE BEAT GOES ON

It's taken half a century for Kerouac's 'On the Road' to reach the screen. But judging from the enthusiasm of Walter Salles's young cast on set in Montreal, it's ready to capture the imagination of a new generation.

By Demetrios Matheou

The film world is littered with great projects that might have been: Orson Welles's Heart of Darkness, David Lean's Nostromo, Kubrick's Napoleon, Michael Powell's The Tempest. For more than 30 years, another project on that list was Francis Ford Coppola's adaptation of *On the Road*, Jack Kerouac's paean to youthful rebellion against postwar conformity, and one of the seminal texts of the Beat generation. Coppola bought the movie rights to On the *Road* in 1979, with the intention of producing the film. In the years that followed, directors who came into the frame included Jean-Luc Godard and Joel Schumacher (each a rum notion, for very different reasons). Scripts were written by the author Russell Banks, the novelist and Lost Highway screenwriter Barry Gifford, and by Coppola and his nephew Roman. Actors mooted for the leads included Dennis Hopper, Brad Pitt and Colin Farrell; a young Russell Crowe once auditioned for the role of Old Bull Lee, Kerouac's thinly disguised portrait of his Beat chum William Burroughs.

But nothing happened. And as the project stalled, so the novel's reputation as being unfilmable grew. Coppola himself once commented: "That's the interesting thing about *On the Road*: it's definitely something of a spirit, but no one quite knew how to put the flesh on it."

Until now. It's a sub-zero December evening in Old Montreal, so cold that the streets are deserted. But inside the Golden Lion, a nightclub nestled off quaint, cobbled Notre Dame Street, the temperature in every respect is piping hot. The club's dim interior has the glow of another era, the late 1940s. Young, white couples are seated around lamplit tables, the men uniform in their well-cut suits and Brylcreemed hair, their partners in pastel dresses, heels and a fetching array of hats. Their enthusiasm is tinged with a sense of novelty, maybe even transgression.

These dainty punters are listening to a black, bebop-inflected jazz band, led by a short but larger-than-life singer in a wide-shouldered, double-breasted suit and spats, whose performance style involves comically contortionist dance moves and outlandish lyrics. A raucous accompaniment comes from the back of the room, where two exceedingly handsome men in borrowed house jackets are propping up the bar, three sheets to the wind, whooping and hollering along. "Slim knows time!" yells one of them. And it's clear that, of all the people in the room, they do too.

This is the world of *On the Road*, finally in front of the camera. The man on stage is the film's version of real-life jazz curiosity Slim Gaillard, played by the equally eccentric Coati Mundi of Kid Creole and the Coconuts. The afficionados at the bar are Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, fictional riffs on Kerouac himself and his friend Neal Cas-

sady, played by actors Sam Riley and Garrett Hedlund. Having finished the song, Mundi is clearly improvising as he flirts with a young woman in the audience, offering to "see you there in the back room, baby". Walter Salles, who has been beaming with pleasure into his monitor at the side of the stage, calls "cut".

In 2004 Coppola saw *The Motorcycle Diaries*, Salles's adaptation of Che Guevara's memoir – another classic tale of self-discovery on the road – and found the man to revive his dream. As it happened, Salles had had his sights on Kerouac's tale for some time. He first read *On the Road* as an 18-year-old in his native Brazil. "The book burst with such life and such desire for experimentation," he recalls, "that in comparison everything else felt tame. You have to remember that in Brazil in the 1960s we were living under military dictatorship. *On the Road*, [Allen Ginsberg's] *Howl*, Beat poetry in general conveyed a sense of freedom and a desire for experimentation that was everything but what you could experience at the time in my country.

"If it wasn't for these pioneers," he continues, "we wouldn't have gone through all those micro-revolutions that were possible in the 6os and early 7os, involving our relationship with sex, drugs, the expansion of the mind, the ecological movement. The Beats represented the birth of counterculture."

Salles looks exhausted, and with good reason. He doesn't do anything by halves. For *The Motorcycle Diaries*, he retraced Guevara's journey around South America three times; for *On the Road*, he, his cast and crew have traversed North America in Kerouac's footsteps, from San Francisco to New Orleans to Mexico, adding some stops of their own – including Argentina, for snow, and Montreal, which is offering interiors for New York and, as tonight, San Francisco. The tally to date: four months and 30,000 miles on the road.

One reason for the sheer number of miles clocked up by Salles is simple: "In most cases the America that is described in the novel no longer exists," he explains. "It's been overtaken by McDonald's and Walmarts. The smaller city centres have been depopulated and industrial suburbs have mushroomed all over the country. This created a major obstacle for us. We needed to go further and further to depict a country that has lost a great deal of its architectural and geographical identity."

Before embarking on shooting his feature, Salles clocked up several thousand miles more to make *In Search of On the Road*, a documentary designed to help him feel his way into the feature. "Although I knew the book well, I was aware that my cultural background wasn't sufficient to direct *On the Road*," he



BEAT GENERATIONS
Walter Salles, on left, directs
Viggo Mortensen, right,
as the William Burroughsinspired Old Bull Lee; below,
Garrett Hedlund as Dean
Moriarty, front, with Sam
Riley as Sal Paradise









TRAVELLING COMPANIONS Salles, below right, assembled a rich supporting cast including Viggo Mortensen, above, Kristen Stewart, right, and newcomer Tom Sturridge, far right with Sam Riley

explains. "The only way for me to decide whether the adaptation was possible was to immerse myself in Kerouac's world, to try to understand the impact that the Beat generation had on American culture at the time, and what kind of impact it still has today." He retraced Kerouac's routes, along the way interviewing surviving Beat poets and artists of subsequent generations who were influenced by them, including Wim Wenders, David Byrne, Laurie Anderson, Sean Penn and Johnny Depp — "many of whom," says Salles, "left their home towns because they'd read *On the Road* or *Howl*."

So what did the documentary teach him? "How very contemporary *On the Road* is, because of the necessity to experiment that it describes, to learn from first-hand experiences and encounters. Philip Glass, who collaborated for many years with Ginsberg, says that for the Beat generation there was nothing to lose except their chains. In the age of reality TV, when so many people live vicariously, that need seems just as urgent."

A fictionalised autobiography, *On the Road* recreates Kerouac's crisscrossing of America in the late 1940s, sometimes hitchhiking with the hobos and economic migrants who peopled the Midwest, sometimes travelling by car in the company of Cassady – the petty criminal, womaniser and manic muse of many of the Beat writers – Cassady's first wife Luanne Henderson and friend Al Hinkle. The book's creation is one of literature's great folkloric tales. Kerouac wrote it in 1951 in a threeweek outpouring of "spontaneous prose" typed onto a single, 120-foot roll of paper, the now-legendary 'scroll'. But the book then underwent years of revisions with nervous editors before being published in 1957.

"The script pretty much follows the structure of the book," says Salles. "At the same time, Kerouac's writing is very impressionistic in parts, as well as essentially sensorial. When we describe the jazz scenes, or the sex, we're very influenced by the jazz-infused quality of the narration. We were also driven by the improvisational nature of the material [in terms of] our cinematic grammar. We tried to arrive in every location with an open mind about the shots — to be somehow spontaneous, driven by the moment. The film acquires a more intuitive quality than the other films I've directed.

"It's anything but a period film," he adds, "just as *The Motorcycle Diaries* wasn't a period film. Black-and-white [cinematography] has been mooted over the years, but we wanted to avoid it. When I spoke to Wim Wenders for

the documentary he said very clearly, 'Don't do a period film. Get those cars dirty!"

Salles has brought along other collaborators from his Guevara adventure, including DP Eric Gautier and production designer Carlos Conti. He's also attracted an enticing cast. The director fought his corner for his relatively unknown leads: Briton Riley (who first made waves as Ian Curtis in *Control*) and Midwesterner Hedlund, whose biggest film to date has been the special-effects-dominated *Tron Legacy*. He surrounded the pair with established talent, including Viggo Mortensen as Old Bull Lee and Kristen Stewart, Kirsten Dunst, Amy Adams and Elisabeth Moss as the long-suffering women in the Beats' orbit, whom Salles describes as "the silent heroines of the book".

BACK TO THE SOURCE

Salles's film retains the fictional names from the 1957 edition of Kerouac's book (the original scroll used the characters' real names). But though the director has specifically not asked for impersonations, the actors have steeped themselves in the real-life templates. "I'm trying to base the background on Kerouac himself," says Riley. "I got myself fit — because he was an athlete and I was a streak of piss — and did dialect sessions based around the recordings I have of him. Kerouac's accent is beautiful, somewhere between New York and Boston and wherever the fuck he feels like stealing from. He was a sponge for experience, in love with the country and the way that people speak in it."

The actor's own voice not only has a smoky timbre to go with the Camel glued to his lips, but also a distinctive Yorkshire accent. "What idiot would turn down this part just because he's British?" he laughs. "I'm game." Riley had plenty of time to acclimatise, during the socalled 'boot camp' ('beat camp' would have been more appropriate) Salles set up in Montreal before the shoot to enable his cast and crew to immerse themselves in the story's milieu. They met Barry Gifford – whose splendid oral history of Kerouac, Jack's Book, has been the director's bible during production – and fellow biographer Gerald Nicosia. They spent time with Cassady's son John and Henderson's daughter Anne Marie Santos. And they watched Salles's documentary, along with films on Charles Mingus and Thelonious Monk, John Cassavetes's seminal Shadows (1959) and Kent MacKenzie's lesser-known *The Exiles* (1961), which follows a



"Walter wanted us to absorb the pace, the urgency of young people at the time, which maybe is lacking nowadays"

Sam Riley

group of native Americans as they drift through LA.

"Walter wanted us absorb the pace, the urgency of young people at the time, which maybe is lacking nowadays," Riley suggests. "The guys in *The Exiles* have this amazing swagger. By the end of the boot camp we were all chomping at the bit."

Kristen Stewart, who plays Marylou/Luanne Henderson, speaks of the revelation of hearing hours of taped interviews with the woman who inspired her character. "Suddenly Luanne had a voice, and we were all completely in love with her," she recalls. "Unlike the boys, she wasn't rebelling against anything – she was just being herself. It was just about being with the people she loved. Getting to know this woman made it so much easier to avoid the caricature of this functional sex toy. Luanne never made herself a commodity. And she really is this amazing link between the two boys. It's a grand statement to make, but that adventure might not have happened without her."

ROAD RAT

As befits a Minnesota farm boy who was driving at the age of eight, Garrett Hedlund's skills behind the wheel have been celebrated during the making of *On the Road*. In fact, after the completion of principal photography, the actor was due to return to the road with Salles to shoot second unit, travelling who knows how many more miles across America in search of the perfect Kerouac road. While Hedlund's own research included spending time with John Cassady in San Francisco, reading Neal Cassady's letters and tackling Proust, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, his cutest prep was the purchase of a 1953 Hudson Hornet. "It's just a road rat," he purrs. "It doesn't have all its sidings, the paint's stripped from it,

it wasn't really safe on the freeway. But before filming I was able to cruise around Los Angeles and get a feel for the car. I offered it to the production, but they went for a '49. And we've had some wonderful moments in that car. I remember being in Patagonia to get the blizzard shots. It was snowing the whole day, and it was me, Sam, Kristen and Danny [Morgan, who plays the Hinkle character Ed Dunkel] sitting inside the car while every next shot was being set up, for a whole day, in some sort of delirium. And there's no heater in that fucking Hudson."

As Carlo Marx – *On the Road*'s surrogate for Ginsberg – Salles cast another up-

and-coming Brit, Tom Sturridge. With his dark hair and thick-rimmed glasses, he promises to make a satisfyingly intense Ginsberg — and an unfamiliar one. "This is an Allen Ginsberg that no one's ever heard of," Sturridge suggests. "A 19-year-old significantly different to the bald, Buddhist, confident, poetry-spouting 42-year-old on the T-shirt. Ginsberg had an incredibly complicated youth. He was the one who agreed to have his mother lobotomised, because she was a schizophrenic, and the discovery of his sexuality was a difficult process, which Neal Cassady opened up but also completely fucked up. His relationship with himself was one of disgust and yet a kind of prophetic arrogance.

"One of the things about Ginsberg is that there's so much material," he adds. "I read a ridiculous amount of it—his diaries, his letters, everything. But it doesn't matter if you know what he was eating for breakfast on Thursday and what he was masturbating to and what poem he was reading unless you can say 'I love you' to the actor in front of you and make it believable."

But all this background reading did help, he says, when it came to improvisation. "It's not like you're doing an improvised film set in London about three normal teenagers and can say any old rubbish," he points out. "These guys were some of the more interesting minds of the period. They were incredibly well read. Their frame of reference is significantly different to mine and Sam's. You've got to arm yourself. So the night before a scene, I look it over, go over the diaries, go over the letters, find stuff that you bring out spontaneously. It's where the research pays off."

Riley chips in, recalling the scenes they shot with Viggo Mortensen in New Orleans: "He's wanted to play Burroughs for a while. He turned up with his own pistol and shoulder holster, his own old books—Céline, for example—ones that we could use in the movie because they were first editions. And he had a million ideas. He was just inspiring. But I was pretty nervous about the improvisation. Often we've come to the end of a scene and there's no cut, we just keep going, shouting out whatever we feel—obviously within context. So I was nervous about what Viggo might start staying. 'So what do you think about Nietzsche, Sal?' 'Ah... übermensch!"

The unspoken question, the elephant on the set, is whether 50 years after Kerouac's odyssey – when Greyhounds and letter-writing have been replaced by air travel and the internet, and the younger generation seems so much more knowing – *On the Road* can possibly have the same impact. The actors, not least the younger ones, seem to feel it can.

"Everyone thinks On the Road is about the way these guys broke away from stale, structured 1950s society," says Sturridge. "But actually they were doing what they wanted and going where they wanted pretty early on in their youth, and the book is about trying to apply a value system upon their own anarchy. We live now in a world where we can do whatever we want. It's a much less morally, politically, socially hierarchical universe and you really have to make choices about what you think is important, as opposed to it being prescribed for you. You've got to work out who the fuck you are. That's where On the Road connects."



'On the Road' is released in the UK on 2 November, and is reviewed on page 97





THINGS OVERLOOKED

In his seminal 1985 book 'Suspects', the critic and novelist David Thomson spun a fiction of Kubrick-like complexity, connecting dozens of noir-related movies through expanded pre- and post-film biographies of their iconic characters. Now the UK release of a longer version of 'The Shining' – not to mention 'Room 237', a documentary about the things people have read into Kubrick's film – has prompted the author to imagine a post-film interview of an equally extraordinary kind

By David Thomson Introduction by Michael Atkinson It's hardly a surprise that an entire transliterative microculture has arisen around Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* – the film is a Rubik's Cube with no final solution, a mystery maze with a hundred doors and no exit. It's nothing if not a screamingly provocative piece of work, shoving your shoulder and saying, "Well?" Certainly, Kubrick's is the only movie to have spontaneously generated an entire other film about the free-for-all 'readings' that have proliferated in the three decades since its release: Rodney Ascher's new documentary *Room* 237.

What the sultanic and secretive Kubrick may or may not have intended will remain a great unknowable, now that he's dead, but it's certainly at the core of the questions: what's the film really about? Did Jack Torrance also exist somehow in the distant past? What's with the bear costume? Is Kubrick admitting to have faked the Apollo moon landing? Is the film really about the Native American genocide? Or the Holocaust? Does the hotel's floor plan make the hotel manager's office

impossible – and if so, what's the point of that?

Room 237 is self-consciously a manifestation of what we could call 'extreme interpretation' – a fan mode of engagement with a film that obsessively surpasses notions of auctorial purpose, genre study or thematic context. Scratch the skin of Kubrick's film and you'll find the blood of family dynamics and of writer's block. But the tribe of cinetypologists Ascher found go deeper, to the bone and viscera as they imagine it, in the process transforming the film into a kind of audiovisual Kabbalah, a coded text in which arcane and malevolent secrets lurk. In effect. the deep-read conspiracists in *Room 237* have turned *The Shining* into the Overlook itself – a haunted house with an infinite capacity for hidden realities.

The Shining has always been that kind of movie: a fabulously rich fruitcake of a film so singular and abstruse – yet bristling with genre stuff – that its inconclusiveness becomes a Pandora's box, an embarrassment of possibilities. This was a common aspect



MINE'S A DOUBLE Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) orders a drink from Lloyd the barman (Joe Turkel) in Stanley Kubrick's endlessly analysed 1980 film 'The Shining'

of Kubrick's late work — the head-shaking weirdness of *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) may yield, with time, its own library of Babel, and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) — despite its solid-footing historical context and sociopolitical thrust — exudes a certain amperage of pure mystery. Of course, *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) is the aboriginal enigma-as-film, and yet *The Shining* has it beat — the infinity of the cosmos and the inexplicability of alien intelligence turn out to be a far less fecund and inspiring junkyard for theory-bakers than the isolated maze-house, the family in meltdown and the metaphysical imposition of the past on the present.

In general, we're talking about a certain kind of auteurist *über*-movie — a personality-driven film so recklessly crammed with stuff that its dangling questions, ellipses and ambiguities force our involvement beyond what's on the screen. It's arguable that *Citizen Kane* was this mode's Genesis movie, and it's possible that no other film has received so many readings and yet may offer more still. (I alone, for instance, know what's wrong with Mary Kane, and some

day I'll tell the world.) Textural density must be mated with a measure of defiant inscrutability, or at least indefiniteness. Many of Welles's other films, especially *Touch of Evil*(1958), also possess this extra dimension, as does plenty of Hitchcock, Powell and Pressburger, Bergman, Rivette, Tarkovsky and Lynch. (You could be tempted to include, say, Godard's *WeekEnd*, but I'd say no – Godard's auto-destructing diegeses leave out the possibility of alternate layers of extreme interpretation. Resnais's *Last Year in Marienbad*, on the other hand, would only count if it actually had a plot.)

Movies that take the shape of their narrative's enigmatic objects, like Wojciech Has's *The Saragossa Manuscript*(1965), certainly qualify, and in this way *The Shining* has a special debt to owe to its geography. Being trapped in the multiple mazes of the Overlook is not merely evocatively metaphoric but a childlike pleasure – and you can't tell me the seductive allure of the isolated-monster-hotel-as-boundless-playground paradigm isn't part of what's attracting the crowd. (Indeed, Danny

Torrance's tragic plight is that he has nobody to play with—and it's that vacuum that the ghosts rush to fill.) Sparking creative-play ideas and severe childhood anxieties simultaneously, the Overlook is an irresistible place, one which Kubrick and his lens thoroughly explore as if reconnoitering for a camping trip and a game of war.

Just as conspiracy theories – particularly as they're fuelled and bred online – are really just zesty acts of creative fiction-making, with the 'author' and the 'voice' in perpetual and tantalising collusion, so *Room 237*'s brand of 'over-reading' isn't analysis so much as invention – a way to turn ordinary passive moviewatching into active fabricating participation. Personal-screen 'interactivity' is kindergarten doodling compared to this kind of super-ersatz scholarship, just as movies as interdimensional as Kubrick's don't happen upon us too much anymore.

'Room 237' is released in the UK on 26 October, and is reviewed on page 102; 'The Shining' is rereleased on 2 November



A LITTLE TOUCH OF AMBER

By David Thomson

How easy it is to believe our monsters have gone away; and how comforting to forget that they are ours always. I used to tell stories about Jack Torrance and his cold demise. Over the years the stories grew taller, and sometimes I thought I heard Jack laughing at them. I even wondered if his circumflex eyebrows leaped up in challenge. But, of course, they were fixed, frozen and dead. Ah, what a reckless fallacy that is - death - as if the shining mind couldn't fight off minus 273 degrees of Celsius.

Do you know that odd worry that you are being heard, and thought about? Sometimes I still wake up in the middle of the night trembling, and no matter how dark it is there's a glow about me. This has alarmed women and dogs. But sooner or later we are most of us alarming.

Well, I got a letter, handwritten, from "Randy" at the Oregon State Mental Hospital in Salem. It said: "Do we have witches here! Why don't you come up and see me sometime?" There was a smiley face, with eyebrows like icicles. Did this Randy know that I was already headed up north? I have people in a little town called Drain. So a few days later, there I was on the bleak lawn of the hospital, with fall descending, and "Randy" grinning at me from his wheelchair, wearing a robe the colour of dried blood. He was older, of course, until he grinned, and the grin was strange: a rigour had never quit his eyes, and I began to see that the smile was permanent and therefore uncertain.

"Good of you to come," he said softly. "We don't see too many 'realies' up here."

"Do they treat you well?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"The care is adequate? Up to snuff?"

"Oh, it's up to snuff," he assured me. "We have a lot of

the boys and girls in white and She is here, of course, old rat-faced Ratched – butter wouldn't melt in her ice-box. We don't forget her for long. But the boys and girls don't get in the way. The ghosts come and go, like always, like at the Overlook. Did you know they burnt that down?"

"I heard," I said. There was a conference facility there now, the Charlie Rose Brain Center it was called.

"Not that burning makes a damn bit of difference. Or nuclear conflagration for that matter. The ghosts are dead already, so you can't kill 'em anymore." He liked this point and burst out in that old cackle of laughter – it had always been the first alarming sign. Then he asked me, "You don't have the sap of the grain, do you?"

"They told me it was forbidden," I said.

"So it is," he agreed, "but we specialise in the forbidden here – a shot of the amber, fornication, gambling, a little of the old red rum perhaps. I'll be seeing Lloyd later."

I was surprised. "He's still here?"

"Of course! Wears a white jacket, doesn't he, and doles out the medicine. That's how he passes. They're all here."

"The fire didn't finish them?"

"You can burn down the house, incinerate the screen, melt the projectors. But the shine remains. It's all digitalis now, you know."

"How does that happen?" I asked. "I never have understood that."

"Easy! Jack Torrance is a stiff, isn't he? And the other Jack went away at last – some sadness got him. And Stan! Well, he was never exactly believable in life, was he? But here you are listening to me, the caretaker, and there across the way dusting the plants where there aren't any flowers – do you see? – that's Delbert Grady. We're never going to let him go. Know why?"

I think I dreaded the answer, but I had come all that way. I didn't have to say anything, except open myself up −it was like making love.

"It's because fiction doesn't die, old sport. First of all, we're never quite there, but then you can't get rid of us. Because you believe. You shine! For all I know – and I am sequestered, after all – you've brought the news that we



topped the poll. *The Shining* is number one – right?"

"Well, actually, that's Vertigo."

Glee followed grief in his terrible face. "There you are!" he cried. "And what is that but the biggest death-wish dream you ever had? You know the little girls we had at the Overlook?"

"The ones who called to Danny from the end of the corridor?"

"The very same. They're here. We call them Madeleine and Judy but, truth to tell, it takes an experienced child molester to pick them apart. Luckily, we are provided for up here in that respect."

His mouth opened as in laughter but there was no sound, or so I thought at first, but then I realised that Delbert Grady, across the lawn, had straightened up from his imagined herbaceous border and was lip-synching Torrance's mirth. It was a curious malfunction of the system, as if the merriment was at the end of a plumber's tunnel.

"So, all of you are inmates here?"

"Inmates." Jack said the word over to himself. "Well, we are distinctly friendly and we are all 'in', as they say, but still 'inmates' doesn't convey the privileged status of the guests here. You see, we have people from so many stories. Story is the Esperanto of our brave world."

"Who else is here?" I had to ask it.

"Oh..." He made a church with his fingers, closed his eyes and let the stream of ghosts pass by. "We have Baby Jane, what a pest! Rick and Louis from *Casablanca*, à deux."

"The beautiful friendship."

"Exactly. Then there's Firefly and Teasdale, David and Susan and Baby makes three, and everyone from that 1939 house party – it always ends up with the same accident – and then there's Charlie and Raymond, working on a script, I think. Of course, this is high security, so we have Norman, the Lecter family, Verdoux, Chigurh and all the frogs from the magnolia trees."

"Is Wendy here?" I asked. "I wonder what she thinks of it."

"Alas, Wendy, as you may recall, is what is known as a

survivor. She did get away. So she had her moment. She moved to Denver, married a pastor, but he beat her and then shot 17 of his congregation one Sunday morning. Do you recall?"

"There are so many of these slaughters."

"Oh, you can get used to bloodshed once you've had your nose cut off a few times playing Nosey Parker. Anyway, the good Wendy, poor woeful Wendy, she drifted, and now her lot is social insecurity, Medicaid and a little Alzheimer's in a town called Bend. Bend but don't break, they say. She has her memories—just—and she says very little. But she never did, did she? A screamer, except in bed, if you know what I mean. Tight-lipped there. That's what you get with survival these days."

"And I suppose up here in the new Overlook you have more women than you can count."

"I am working my way diligently through the Busby Berkeley chorus lines and I have my eye on another Madeleine – she lives in a curious Parisian mood – but there are a couple of bossy nurses who take care of her. Only a child. Depravity reigns," he sighed, like someone who had finished a large meal.

"And murder?"

"When everyone's a ghost it's open season, isn't it? We have a lot of deaths — Bonnie and Clyde are going to be shot up again this evening, continuous performances. It can be monotonous — or maybe ghosts grow jaded." He was sinking into some gloomy reverie but then he pulled himself together. "Of course, I have my novel."

"You're still writing it?"

"It's still writing me!"

"All work and no play..."

"That was my Gertrude Stein period," he snapped, "and those were just the top hundred sheets to torment the weepy Wendy. Beneath the ditto'd 'All work...', I got down to some real play. It advances."

An idea occurred to me. "Perhaps I could take it back with me and find you a publisher."

He sneered. "You survivors are so pathetic! You still think there's something called publishing?



Wendy moved to Denver, married a pastor, but he beat her and then shot 17 of his congregation one Sunday morning

SCENE OF THE CRIME Left to right: the Overlook Hotel, Wendy (Shelley Duvall), the Grady daughters (Lisa and Louise Burns)





Like a profession called gravedigging? Haven't you noticed that the bodies are just left to rot in the fields now, like dinosaurs in a Terrence Malick film? There's no funeral business, not with death so widespread. And there's no publishing any more. It's just a matter of whether you're fictional or not. Whether you shine."

"What became of Danny?"

"Aha, that rascal. I think you'd have to say that he directs the whole show. He was always precocious. He and Stanley would play three-dimensional chess and talk of Heidegger while we were setting up. Stanley had never had a son, you know, and he invested in the boy. So Danny became what used to be called a director. And very good he was, too, until the powers that be invited him to run the Overlook altogether."

"Hotel management?"

"Not exactly. Running the Overlook is a larger enterprise. It's authorial, but with a spiritual element. Overlook does set you thinking of gods, don't you see? Danny encourages the angel in us. He just wants everyone to shine. Ah, here comes Lloyd with my yardarmer."

There was no one approaching us, or no one I could see, but there was a pretty butterfly (of the Haze genus, I fancy) dancing towards us. And then from somewhere I heard a deep melodious voice saying, "Here you are, Mr Torrance, a little touch of the amber."

Torrance took the butterfly out of the air and seemed to drink it down. Then the voice resumed. "And for your guest, sir? A pick-me-up?"

I was aghast. I knew I should not let myself believe. And yet I was thirsty. God, was I thirsty! And I heard Jack saying, "Perhaps a Glenlivet on the rocks. Can you make it a double, Lloyd?"

"I happen to have the makings with me, Mr Torrance." "You're my man, Lloyd!" he cried out.

"And you're mine, sir," replied the ghost of a barman. For a second, I thought I saw the hint of his smile, but I suppose it was just the sunset catching the framework on a gazebo. I put out my hand and a humming bird came

to rest there. I had no doubts. I brought the tiny palpitation to my lips and felt the slither and the smoke of Glenlivet. It was the best I have ever had, and closer to a triple than a double.

"Well," I said, "I should be coming – no, I mean going." "I don't think I can permit that," said Jack Torrance. "Permit it?" I queried.

"That was a hell of a drink you just had, a snort more than a sniff, and I have a responsibility. You should not be out on these country roads after dark. We have accommodations here. Nothing fancy, you understand, rather old-fashioned. But where's the harm in that? You can get a good night's sleep – just order your dreams with the breakfast. You could have Jeanne Moreau from Les Amants, Miss Dickinson in tights or I believe that Louise Brooks has one of her rare evenings off. No doubt she could be persuaded."

"No," I protested. I felt a surge of panic. "I have to be home tonight."

"Home!" he said, but his mockery was not without weary affection. I looked away and there was Kasper Gutman in a deck-chair, heaving with silent laughter. He said, "Home, my dear sir, has been folded up and put away like a tuxedo. If you devote a lifetime to the movies, you have to let the shining have its way. It's so much more entertaining than survival. Lloyd, give him another."

"Certainly, sir," said Lloyd, and when I looked up I believed I could see him at last, a skull in the twilight and a simile in the evening air (correction: I meant to say 'smile').

Film sources: 'The Shining' (1980), 'One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest' (1975), 'Vertigo' (1958), 'What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?' (1962), 'Casablanca' (1942), 'Duck Soup' (1933), 'Psycho' (1960), 'The Silence of the Lambs' (1991), 'Hannibal' (2001). 'Monsieur Verdoux' (1947), 'Bringing up Baby' (1938), 'No Country for Old Men' (2007), 'Magnolia' (1999), 'Bonnie and Clyde' (1967), 'The Tree of Life' (2011), 'Lolita' (1962), 'Les Amants' (1958), 'The Maltese Falcon' (1941)

Stanley had never had a son, you know, and he invested in the boy. So Danny became what used to be called a director

MAN TO MAN Left to right: Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) with his son Danny (Danny Lloyd), Lloyd the barman (Joe Turkel)

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Deep focus

THE DARK SIDE OF EALING

The term 'Ealing' has become a byword for a slightly cosy vision of post-war Britain as a land of loveable eccentrics, tight-knit communities and cheery public-spiritedness. But the comedies that enshrined these values make up only a fraction of the studio's output during the 1940s and 50s. The first of a new quarterly series of 'Deep Focus' features — taking an in-depth look at pivotal movements, genres or individuals in cinema history via a study of 12 key films — examines the darker currents running through Ealing's surprisingly diverse output, which also embraced war films, *noir*, costume drama and social realism

By Mark Duguid

The Hollywood pioneers chose California for its light – and to escape the East Coast patent lawyers. Light may have been one reason, too, why in 1902 British pioneer Will Barker moved his Autoscope Company from Stamford Hill to West London's Ealing, where he built three glasshouses to stage his early feature films. Years later, the studio passed to theatre impresario Basil Dean – whose Associated Talking Pictures replaced Barker's greenhouses with modern soundstages - and eventually to producer Michael Balcon, co-founder of Gainsborough Studios, early champion of Alfred Hitchcock, arch-opponent of the Rank monopoly and one of the few figures in British cinema ever to merit the name 'mogul'. It was Balcon who renamed the production company after its studio home, and turned Ealing into an internationally recognised brand. Thanks to Balcon, Ealing is now best remembered for a different kind of light, and for a different kind of escape.

So complete is Ealing's association with comedy that you could be forgiven for assuming that the studio produced nothing else. In fact, of Ealing's 95 feature releases under Balcon, only 30 are strictly comedies and less than a third of those make up what is now canonised as 'Ealing comedy'. Yet thanks to recurring appearances in TV schedules for more than half a century, those eight or nine films – from 1947's Hue and Cry to 1955's *The Ladykillers* – have so completely entered the national consciousness that 'Ealing comedy' is as much a figure of speech as the collective name for a group of films. You can even drop the 'comedy' without changing the meaning. 'Ealing', as an adjective, is at least as likely to be used by politicians or political journalists as by film historians. The meaning is imprecise but it embraces both modestly progressive values and a respect for tradition; both a decent, cheery public-spiritedness and a resistance to stern authority and bureaucracy; both an embodiment of community and an endearing eccentricity; and, above all, a profoundly British sensibility – all qualities that made a very different kind of sense in a post-war Britain of national renewal and enduring austerity than they do now, our new familiarity with austerity notwithstanding.

This memory of Ealing carries an official stamp of approval from Sir Michael Balcon himself. "We were people of the immediate post-war generation," he remembered of his Ealing team. "We voted Labour for the first time after the war; this was our mild



Within these walls: Ealing Studios in its heyday

revolution. We had a great affection for British institutions... The comedies were a mild protest, but not protests at anything more sinister than the regimentation of the times."

It's not that the Ealing comedies don't support their reputation for warming whimsy. In Hue and Cry, an army of children foils a gang of robbers who make the mistake of using a boys' comic to send their coded messages. In 1949's *Passport to Pimlico*, the residents of a London street declare an independent republic and temporarily free themselves from rationing (and the British weather). In *The* Lavender Hill Mob (1951), a timid bank clerk and a genial artisan rob the Bank of England and smuggle out its gold in the form of Eiffel Tower paperweights. In The Titfield Thunderbolt (1952), denizens of a sleepy English village unite to run their own steam railway and see off the threat of a private bus company.

But balance that list of synopses against another: a disinherited orphan coolly murders each of the relatives standing between him and a dukedom (*Kind Hearts and Coronets*, 1949); the alcoholic inhabitants of a Scottish island humiliate the English military officer who tries to stop them stealing contraband whisky (*Whisky Galore!*, 1949); textile bosses

"Comedy lets you do things that are too dangerous, or that a certain audience can't accept"

Alexander Mackendrick

and militant trade unionists combine to exterminate a brilliant but naive inventor (*The Man in the White Suit*, 1951); a gang of ruthless thieves attempt to murder a defenceless old lady (*The Ladykillers*).

The core eight comedies split evenly between what we might call 'light' and 'dark' - between fantasies of mild rebellion and something more mischievous and cynical. And if we add the semi-canonised ninth comedy – *The 'Maggie'* (1954), in which the devious captain of a decrepit Clyde puffer boat exploits the unfortunate American businessman who makes the mistake of hiring him – the dark has the upper hand. Alexander Mackendrick, who directed four films on this 'dark' list, held quite different views on comedy to Balcon's: "Personally, I am very attracted by comedy, or rather by a certain kind of comedy... It lets you do things that are too dangerous, or that a certain audience can't accept." That audience might have included Balcon, who warned Mackendrick off satire after The Man in the White Suit.

Balcon was a contradictory figure, emerging from some accounts (not least his own) as a dedicated enabler of talent and from others as a kind of middlebrow demagogue. He was loyal to those who stayed with him and generous in developing careers (Ealing's directors were mostly promoted from within), but could be resentful and catty to those he felt had deserted him – ask Hitchcock, who was publicly slimed for his 1939 departure for Hollywood. Balcon joined Ealing in 1938 and fashioned his studio in reaction to his recent unhappy experiences at MGM British – he wanted a "studio with team spirit", friendly and democratic, not cold and authoritarian. And he had his own sense of how success would come. Ealing could never be a giant, so its films would make a virtue of their scale; they would be well-made and human-sized and they would seek to please a domestic audience first rather than vainly aim to conquer an American one.

Balcon's Ealing was defined during the war that arrived little more than a year after he inherited the studio. Balcon himself became a fierce, sometimes shrill advocate of his studio and the industry. He successfully campaigned for the cinemas to be reopened and saved Ealing from the fate of some studios, which were requisitioned as stores for munitions and supplies. He led criticism of the official line on film propaganda, even if his own studio's first efforts were



BEI MATTONAL ABCHIVE (1)

no better than average. But they got better. The creative meetings around Ealing's famous round table produced a remarkable commonality of approach, and war obliged Balcon to refresh his team.

By 1942 Ealing's war films were markedly different from those elsewhere: tougher in their expression of the scale of the Nazi threat, more democratic in their representation of class and regional diversity, sharpened by the injection of documentary skills and attitudes. This had much to do with the contribution of Alberto Cavalcanti, poached from the GPO Film Unit by Balcon in 1940. Cavalcanti would play a similar role at Ealing to the one he had played at the GPO under John Grierson, as a creative catalyst who took on much of the task of training Ealing's emerging generation of young directors and technicians. His influence brought shading and shadows to Ealing's war films, drawing them away from comic-strip tales of individual heroism among gentlemen and officers and towards more three-dimensional accounts that stressed teamwork, courage, real struggle, real suffering and endurance.

But Cavalcanti's was just one voice. At Ealing Balcon assembled a strikingly enduring and apparently cohesive team. Directors Basil Dearden, Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Harry Watt, Charles Frend, Robert Hamer and Alexander Mackendrick would be responsible for 66 of the 76 features made at Ealing between 1942 and 1959; almost as dominant among Ealing's writers were Angus MacPhail, John Dighton, T.E.B. ('Tibby') Clarke and William Rose; and there was remarkable continuity, too, among producers, cinematographers, composers and designers.

Having found itself in war, Ealing lost its way a little when peace came. Between 1944 and 1949, the studio was unable to fix on any one particular style or genre. It experimented with utopian socialist fantasy (They Came to a City, 1944), chiller (Dead of Night, 1945), literary adaptation (Nicholas Nickleby, 1947), proto-feminist parable (The Loves of Joanna Godden, 1947), flamboyant costume drama (Saraband for Dead Lovers, 1948). All of these were dead ends, though fascinating ones. And it was during this period that Ealing's internal consensus began to break down. The members of the team began to assert their individuality.

Charles Barr's seminal book *Ealing Studios*, first published in 1977, identifies two distinct schools in post-war Ealing. The mainstream is built around Crichton, Frend, Tibby Clarke and the director/producer partnership of Dearden and Michael Relph: its high-water marks include the 'light' comedies (all written by Clarke and all but one directed by Crichton) plus the melancholy epic Scott of the Antarctic (Frend, 1948), the police propaganda film The Blue Lamp (Dearden, 1949) and the stoically heroic *The Cruel Sea* (Frend, 1952).

At their best, the films of Ealing's mainstream are direct, calmly progressive, tolerant, moral but not puritanical. But the same school is blamed for Ealing's perceived 1950s decline into worthy but over-polite liberalism, bland affirmation of stolid middle-class conformity



The people's war: 'The Foreman Went to France' showed working men defying bosses' complacency

or, at its worst, a reactionary embrace of pre-war social structures (the village-green feudalism of Crichton and Clarke's Titfield Thunderbolt).

Running parallel in Barr's assessment is a 'maverick' strain, embodied principally by Robert Hamer and Alexander Mackendrick, with Cavalcanti an occasional fellow traveller. (Harry Watt, whose post-war films were made in Australia or Africa, seems to escape categorisation.) The mavericks' films are irreverent, challenging, ironic, cynical and morally ambivalent, and they more freely acknowledge less wholesome impulses. They are less constrained by their times or notions of good taste, and so have aged better.

This quick precis does no justice to the depth of Barr's analysis, which stands as one of the most compelling studies in British film history. In its broad sweep and in much of its detail, it's still persuasive. But Barr himself recanted some of his polemic in later editions of his book, most notably his over-harsh assessment of Basil Dearden, whose gift for melodramatic artifice saw him rescued from critical oblivion in the 1980s. Without qualifying his original narrative of Ealing's decline as the 1950s advanced, Barr makes a striking admission that his characterisation of the deficiencies of Ealing's mainstream was too emphatic: "Both on and off screen Ealing was altogether less limited, less comfortable, less conformist, than the retrospective image suggests".

The mainstream/maverick split suffers

Stung by criticism, Balcon resolved that henceforth Ealing's war stories would be ripped "from the headlines"

most, perhaps, from being so attached to personalities rather than individual films. Dearden's 17 Ealing films include a few that, in their way, are almost as sharpedged as Hamer's or Mackendrick's, if less jaundiced. Frend's The Foreman Went to France (1942) is arguably at least as subversive as Cavalcanti's Went the Day Well? (1942).

A common refrain of Barr's book is that a given film, particularly in Ealing's later phase, ventures into dark, difficult or radical territory before 'retreating' into a comforting status quo. It's a fair charge, though one that could be levelled at a great many British films (not to mention Hollywood ones). But does a compromised 'light' conclusion necessarily erase the darkness of what's gone before? Compromise is built in to studio filmmaking, and sometimes we should acknowledge the bravery of small challenges to the norm. Not all filmmakers can be iconoclasts. After all, aren't most of us a little afraid of the dark?

1. The Foreman Went to France

(Charles Frend, 1942)

With their cartoon 'Jerries' and ripping tales of officer-class derring-do, Ealing's efforts in the early part of the war were not conspicuously convincing, let alone democratic. Stung by criticism of Ships with Wings (sample dialogue: "Get up, you filthy Hun. I want to hit you again!"), Balcon resolved that henceforth Ealing's war stories would be ripped "from the headlines". One such headline inspired The Foreman Went to France: the tale of a munitions-factory foreman who, learning of the collapse of France, defied his bosses' complacency about the fate of vital military equipment on loan to a French factory and undertook his own rescue mission.

The critic Raymond Durgnat put the film in an "admirable trio" - alongside Launder and Gilliat's Millions Like Us and Waterloo Road – that demonstrated a new respect for working-class characters. In synopsis, it reads like a tale of a worker's foresight and heroic bravery, but the film is bolder and more complex than that. Its hero's mission is undeniably courageous, but it is woefully underplanned. Worse, despite his defiance of blinkered authority at home, he is hamstrung by his class's ingrained obeisance to the authority figures he meets in France, each of whom – a station master, the local mayor, a town prefect and a 'British' officer – turns out to be a fifth columnist. It's only thanks to exceptional luck and his more observant, less trusting companions that his mission succeeds.

Thus what might have been a unifying celebration in the vein of *Millions Like Us* becomes an interrogation of both the dangers and the virtues of 'muddling through' and a surprisingly caustic critique of class deference and untrustworthy authority. It even offers an unusually categorical elision of capitalism and fascism: "They're all the same, the capitalist bunch," says Constance Cummings's 'neutral' American, Anne. "Scared to death of communism and just waiting to sell their country to the highest bidder."

2. The Next of Kin

(Thorold Dickinson, 1942)

While Alberto Cavalcanti was busy inculcating a harder-edged realism in Ealing's new generation, it was an interloper, Thorold Dickinson, who would cement the studio's new direction with its gutsiest propaganda piece yet. Originally commissioned to produce a short Army training film on the theme of 'careless talk', Dickinson delivered a feature film (its budget supplemented from Ealing's own coffers) so harrowing that Churchill wanted it shelved as a threat to morale.



'The Next of Kin'

The Next of Kin coolly itemises the security breaches that compromise a top-secret attack on a German U-boat station in Northern France. Though the mission is successful, the forewarned enemy mounts strong resistance and the Allied death toll must be one of the highest in a wartime British film.

In 1940 Ealing had turned out a trio of short films on the same theme for the Ministry of Information that attracted criticism for the way they drew their careless talkers almost exclusively from among the working classes. The Next of Kin painted incautious gossiping as virtually a national disease: "I've always thought if I wanted a nice cushy job I'd come to England as a German spy," laments Reginald Tate's security agent, who struggles vainly to stem the tide of official information flowing out of operation headquarters.

The portrait of a Britain awash with Nazi spies stands in stark contrast to the more unifying vision that Ealing preferred as the war went on, and there is unusually open representation of a seamier England in a subplot involving a cocaine-addicted striptease artist blackmailed by her supplier. Dickinson was blooded as a Republican documentarist during the Spanish Civil War, an experience that helped him create some of the most convincing combat scenes yet filmed. Ironically, his Spanish sojourn nearly had him thrown off the film as a 'premature anti-fascist' and a security risk. Dickinson returned to Ealing a decade later for the stylish if flawed *Secret People* (1951).

3. Went the Day Well?

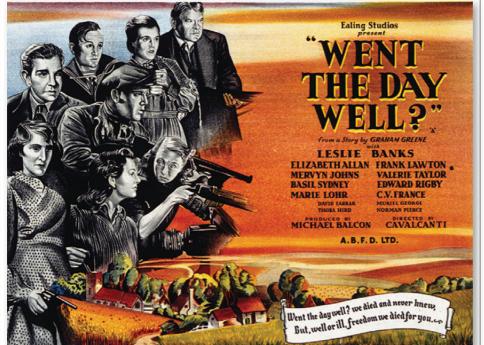
(Alberto Cavalcanti, 1942)

Brazilian-born Cavalcanti, a veteran of both the European avant garde and the British documentary movement, joined Ealing in 1940. His creative influence at Ealing as a teacher and an inspiration to his younger colleagues was incalculable, but his own films there are an uneven collection. By far the best of his solo efforts is Went the Day Well? This most idiosyncratic of Ealing's propaganda films, loosely based on a story by Graham Greene, imagines German invasion beginning with the unannounced arrival of a platoon of 'Royal Engineers' (Germans in disguise) in a docile English village – "the very heart of Miss Marple country", as Penelope Houston put it. With their natural respect for military authority - that theme again - the villagers are at first taken in, but eventually mount a fightback that is both impressive and shocking in its savagery, ultimately emerging as bloodied victors in the "Battle of Bramley End".

The film was attacked for its perceived lack of taste and restraint by a chorus of critics led by The Observer's C.A. Lejeune – very often a sign of an unusually interesting British film. Cavalcanti's surrealist sympathies tell in the sudden shifts from docility to violence (most memorably a postmistress's improvised dismissal of a billeted Nazi using pepper and a hatchet) and in the serial frustration of the villagers' attempts to smuggle out messages to the outside world: one, concealed in a box of eggs, is crushed under the wheels of a careless driver; another, on a slip of paper, is ultimately eaten by a dog. There's inspired mischief, too, in the casting of Leslie Banks, high-minded colonial hero of the reactionary Sanders of the *River*(1935), as the pillar of the local community who is quickly revealed as a German spy.

4. Dead of Night

(Alberto Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Basil Dearden, Robert Hamer, 1945) The tail-end of the war saw something of a revolt against film realism in Britain as the threat of defeat faded and audiences



and filmmakers, tiring of war-related subjects, embraced more varied and escapist fare. The trend was marked by Gainsborough's The Man in Grey (1943) and The Wicked Lady (1945), by Powell and Pressburger's A Canterbury Tale (1944) and I Know Where I'm Going! (1945) and, at Ealing, by The Halfway House and They Came to a City (both 1944) and one of the studio's least characteristic but most enduringly successful films: Dead of Night. Intended as a showcase of Ealing talent, it brought together four of its leading directors for a compendium of five supernatural tales, linked with a connecting narrative. As an experiment, it might have been disastrous, but despite one or two weaker episodes it triumphantly expresses the kind of darker impulses Ealing generally kept under wraps.

The second of Cavalcanti's two tales – in which Michael Redgrave's ventriloquist is apparently possessed by his malevolent mannequin – is the most expressive and uncanny, and the most influential (see the 1963 shocker *Devil Doll* or Richard Attenborough's 1978 Magic). Hamer's episode – in which a long-past crime passionel begins to infect the world of a middle-class couple through their antique mirror – is preferred by Charles Barr, who sees in it a potent critique of middleclass repression and complacency. You can read each tale as the filmmaker's unruly id attempting to slough off Ealing's overdeveloped superego. Hamer's mirror, with its tantalising glimpse of furious passions in a baroque chamber, seems to reflect the attractions of Gainsborough from the perspective of one locked into Ealing's comparative decorum.

Sadly, the 'Ealing chiller' would be a genre of one: Dead of Night was one of a number of experiments abandoned as the studio cast around for a new post-war direction.

5. It Always Rains on Sunday (Robert Hamer, 1947)

Like the unhappy couple in his Dead of Night segment, Hamer's protagonists tend to traverse the boundaries separating the 'respectable' world and its wild, unseemly mirror image. Pink String and Sealing Wax (1945) presented two faces of Victorian Brighton: one a household overseen by a pious, autocratic father and the other a boozy, hostile demi-monde inhabited by an embittered pub landlady, her brutal husband and her selfish lover. There was no doubt which interested the director more. "I enjoyed the melodrama but never felt happy with the

domestic charm," said Hamer a few years later. There's domestic and melodrama in *It Always*

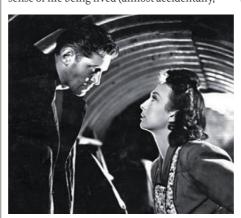
Rains on Sunday, but precious little charm. At the centre of both those films is Googie Withers, the most formidable of Ealing's actresses, who did her best work with Hamer. In It Always Rains she is Rose, dulled by marriage to dreary but reliable George (Edward Chapman) until she's awoken by the sudden return of flash pre-war sweetheart Tommy (John McCallum), now a jail-breaking killer with fate and the police closing in. Around this *noir* triangle, Hamer entwines a string of other characters and their variously drab,



Murderous intent: Mervyn Johns is choked by the ventriloquist's dummy in 'Dead of Night'

'Dead of Night' triumphantly expresses the kind of darker impulses Ealing generally kept under wraps

tragic or tragicomic tales; no film conveys more effectively the entrapment of life in austerity Britain. It builds its reality from the accumulation of detail of life on the cliff-edge of poverty: the petty family squabbles born of cramped opportunities and cheek-by-jowl living; the snatching at half-dreams of escape; the squalid doss-houses and low-rent spivery (a trio of ragged villains pathetically try to fence a lorryload of rollerskates). It has a powerful sense of life being lived (almost accidentally,



'It Always Rains on Sunday

it seems to be present at the exact moment that the long Jewish exodus from the East End to the suburbs began). It's Ealing's most convincingly downbeat evocation of the immediate post-war era, and at least a match for the Boultings' near-simultaneous Brighton Rock.

6. Saraband for Dead Lovers

(Basil Dearden, 1948) In the eyes of its director Seth Holt, 1958's *Nowhere to Go* (see below) was to be "the least Ealing film ever made". Perhaps he hadn't seen Ealing's first Technicolor film, released a decade earlier. Saraband for Dead Lovers was another intriguing blind alley in Ealing's frantic quest for post-war direction - apparently an answer to a call from Ealing's backers, Rank, for more marketable 'prestige' projects.



'Saraband for Dead Lovers'

Adapted from a 1935 novel by the Australian author Helen Simpson (whose *Under Capricorn* was filmed by Hitchcock in 1949), it fills out the sketchy tragedy of Sophie Dorothea of Celle (Joan Greenwood), forcibly married to her Hanoverian cousin George Louis (Britain's future George I), but imprisoned for the last 30 years of her life in her Ahlden castle. Dearden's film rips pages from Gainsborough's book, giving that studio's regular Stewart Granger what would be one of his favourite roles as the Swedish Count Philip Königsmark, whom Simpson characterises as Sophie Dorothea's lover (contemporary accounts are ambiguous).

Though it's more respectful in its historicism than Gainsborough's efforts, Saraband has an unusually heady menu for an Ealing film: glamour, passion, Machiavellian intrigue, adultery, sexual jealousy and murder not to mention expressive Technicolor, uncharacteristically rich art and costume design, and some magnificent wigs. Joan Greenwood would be better used in later Ealing films, but Saraband bucks the trend of the studio's often insipid roles for women in its foregrounding of the power struggle between Françoise Rosay's haughty electress and Flora Robson's ageing seductress. Peter Bull's boorish, oversized George Louis and a pre-fame Anthony Quayle as Königsmark's skulking nemesis offer other unexpected pleasures.

It's an uneven film, but one with some arrestingly baroque images – most memorably the six-minute, dialogue-free masked carnival, a flight of bacchanalian delirium that almost outdoes Powell and Pressburger.

7. Kind Hearts and Coronets

(Robert Hamer, 1949)

If Ealing's first two comedies of 1949, Passport to Pimlico and Whisky Galore!, established a template for what would become 'Ealing comedy', nobody told Robert Hamer. Kind Hearts and Coronets—in which Dennis Price's Louis coolly murders his way through the best part of eight Alec Guinnesses in a bid to inherit a title and avenge his slighted mother—is one of a kind: Ealing's most cynical film and Hamer's masterpiece. Philip French reckons it one of "arguably the two most perfect British movies" (alongside another 1949 release, The Third Man).

There are intriguing antecedents among earlier Ealing works: 1938's The Ware Case follows an engagingly insouciant bon vivant with an exaggerated sense of entitlement who may or may not have murdered to advance his status, while the 1943 Will Hay vehicle My Learned Friend features an escaped maniac cheerfully dispatching all those who put him away. And Kind Hearts is indebted to the Wildean wit of its source, Roy Horniman's 1907 novel Israel Rank. All the same, Hamer's film comes out of left field: no other Ealing film – perhaps no British film up to that time - even approaches its elegant amorality. The only true period piece among the comedies, it's also the most perennially modern, thanks to Louis's refrigerated wit, the eroticism that smoulders between Louis and Joan Greenwood's Sibella, the delicious



inventiveness of the murders and Guinness's variously boorish and buffoonish D'Ascoynes.

Mackendrick may have had a similarly cynical vision, but Hamer seems to have had by far the rockiest ride with Balcon: a string of blocked or stillborn projects after *Kind Hearts* was broken only by the dismal adaptation *His Excellency*. He fell victim to alcoholism – and to his own inability to either compromise or find ways, as Mackendrick did, to play the system. As David Thomson put it, "He now looks like the most serious miscarriage of talent in the post-war British cinema."

8. Cage of Gold

(Basil Dearden, 1950)

Dearden's film is a kind of *noir* melodrama, beginning – as a *noir* should – with a fateful encounter: between Judith (Jean Simmons), an attractive young portrait painter, and handsome ex-RAF officer Bill (David Farrar), for whom she'd once nursed a teenage passion. But it reverses *noir*'s dynamic: the superficially charming Bill is a kind of gender-switched *femme fatale* – a louche playboy with expensive tastes but limited means whose dangerous and manipulative sexual



Relative values: the eight D'Ascoynes played by Alec Guinness in 'Kind Hearts and Coronets'

allure portends a violent and tragic end. Luring Judith away from her reliably wholesome doctor fiancé, Bill marries her for her money – only to leave her, pregnant, as soon as he realises she hasn't got any, fleeing to Paris with the gold watch he gave her as a wedding present and disappearing into his old nightclub haunt. With Bill believed killed, she marries her all-forgiving ex-lover (who has sacrificed the lucre of private practice to replace his ageing father in the new NHS), and all is well until Bill returns with blackmailing intent.

Cage of Gold has elements of melodrama at its most outré: unwitting bigamy, a false death and a credibility-defying coincidence at its conclusion. It allows its heroine (Jean Simmons in her only Ealing role) a sexuality, even if it then glumly contains it. It might have made a good project for Robert Hamer; it evens feels a little like an assemblage of bits of Hamer's films, evoking the parallel-worlds structure of Pink String and Sealing Wax and the tug of war between a rekindled passion and safe domesticity at the heart of *It Always* Rains on Sunday. The Francophile Hamer would probably have brought more allure to the film's after-dark Paris too. Even so, Cage of Gold is one of Ealing's more exotic films, offering Farrar – whose rough sexuality enlivened Black Narcissus (1947) – his most satisfyingly unfettered role outside the work of Powell and Pressburger.

9. The Man in the White Suit

(Alexander Mackendrick, 1951) Ealing had briefly held the rights to Kingsley Amis's 1954 comic novel Lucky Jim, which was eventually made by the Boulting brothers. Balcon seems to have had no regrets about passing it up: "Our comedies were done with affection," he told the critic John Ellis. "The Boulting comedy had a sharper edge to it, and was unkinder." As so often, Balcon's memory

In 'The Man in the White Suit'. a massed pursuit through the night-time streets suggests the climax of 'Frankenstein'

was selective. The four comedies for Ealing directed by Alexander Mackendrick - from Whisky Galore to The Ladykillers – are not without kindness, but their humour more than matches the Boultings' in its sharpness and its cruelty. The affection Mackendrick apparently felt for Captain Waggett, the thirsty islanders' hopelessly outwitted opponent in Whisky Galore!, only made his humiliation more poignant. And in The Man in the White Suit, Mackendrick's ability to see all sides serves to sharpen, not blunt, his scattergun barbs.

"In a psychotic world, neurotics seem normal," said Mackendrick in 1968, apparently in explanation of the film's naive hero Sidney Stratton (Alec Guinness), an autistic savant of a chemist who invents an unbreakable, supremely dirt-repelling yarn. Almost immediately, Sidney finds himself pursued by both the trade unions and the textile barons, who quickly realise that the invention spells catastrophe for the industry.

Mackendrick comprehensively outsmarts the Boultings' later industrial-relations satire *I'm All Right Jack* (1959), ruthlessly teasing out the implications of his premise. The bosses' strategies to stop Sidney's invention start at deception, escalate to coercion, imprisonment and sexual inducements (in an apparent plan to prostitute Daphne, daughter of the mill-owner), and culminates in a massed pursuit through the night-time streets that suggests the climax of Frankenstein, minus only the pitchforks and braziers.

10. The Ship That Died of Shame

(Basil Dearden, 1955)

In the early 1950s, British studios turned back to war subjects with triumphalist celebrations of heroic endeavour (which typically jettisoned any 'people's war' ballast along the way) such as The Dam Busters (1955), Reach for the Sky (1956) or The Battle of the River Plate (1956). Ealing had better reasons than most to look back on its war years with pride, but its own later war films – *The Cruel Sea* and *Dunkirk* (1958) – were sober, even gloomy. Halfway between this pair came the oddball The Ship That Died of Shame: part naval drama, part post-war socialproblem film, part supernatural melodrama.

It's the story of motor gunboat 1087 and the close-knit trio who fought bravely in her. Adrift after the war, they get the old crew back together, restore their former vessel and put her to work in a reckless but rewarding smuggling venture. *The Ship That Died of Shame* fits in a mini-cycle of films of the period in which men turn to crime in a bid to recapture the excitement of war, Carol Reed's The Third Man being the defining example. It belongs, too, in the sequence of 'social problem' films that Dearden and his producer partner Michael Relph continued post-Ealing with the likes of *Sapphire* (1959) and *Victim* (1961).

The Ship That Died of Shame is striking not just for its departure from the generalised self-congratulation of post-war war films, or even its acknowledgement of the addictive thrill of risk (Richard Attenborough's hothead George Hoskins is an ambiguous asset in war but a dangerous liability in peacetime), but for the way it embraces the fantastic within a realist frame: the ship, already a substitute for the wife George Baker's hero lost in the war, finally rebels against its increasingly immoral missions (culminating in the foggy rescue of a child-killer).





'The Ship That Died of Shame'



'Nowhere to Go

(Alexander Mackendrick, 1955)

It's a measure of the obstinacy of memory that the image of Ealing as quaint and gentle has persisted despite the unbroken popularity of *The Ladykillers*. The twisted last hurrah of Ealing comedy (though there were still two comedies to come) marks the triumphant terminus of Mackendrick's five-film Ealing career – and with it the studio's 'maverick' tendency.

This most dreamlike of Ealing's comedies (the story came to writer William Rose in a dream) has a peculiarly assorted criminal gang - an eccentric intellectual, a scrupulously polite ex-officer, a Teddy boy, a lumbering heavyweight boxer and a sneering hoodlum - masquerading as a string quartet in order to infiltrate the rickety home of an elderly widow, where they plan and carry out a daring robbery, only to be foiled by their frail hostess. Its events may even themselves be the dream of Katie Johnson's Mrs Wilberforce, the most memorable in a procession of Ealing little-old-lady figures who serve as either charmingly eccentric remnants of Victorian England or preservers of a reactionary morality – sometimes both.

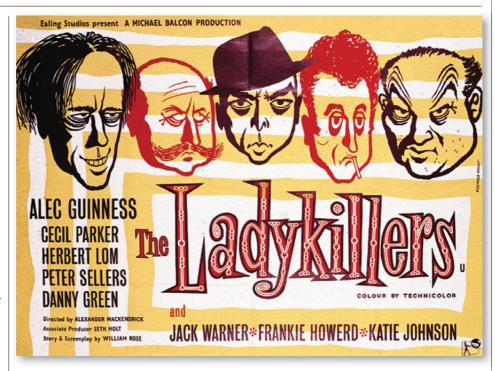
Charles Barr indulges in a fanciful (but surprisingly convincing) reading in which the gang becomes the postwar Labour government, an unstable coalition whose radical plans to redistribute wealth are ultimately undone by its own internal divisions and a lack of ruthlessness in the face of the disarming charm of the conservative establishment (Mrs Wilberforce), which ultimately regains control and reaps the rewards of the new prosperity (the loot). As Barr admits, this may not quite have been on the mind of either writer or director. But, like Mackendrick's previous comedies, The Ladykillers sets up an opposition between dynamic (though perhaps selfish and reckless) forces of progress and obstinate resistors to change, without ever completely revealing which has his support.

12. Nowhere to Go

(Seth Holt, 1958)

Midway through Nowhere to Go, Paul Gregory (George Nader) – confidence trickster, jailbreaker and now accidental murderer – is told by the crime lord he turns to for help (a pre-Steptoe Harry H. Corbett): "All you gotta remember: you're on your own. Nobody's gonna be on your side when it comes to doing anything much." It's the inverse of Ealing's usual faith in community – but then there's little hint of community in Nowhere to Go. It's a film without a hero: Gregory isn't even an antihero, just a clever, ruthless man on the make in a London peopled with lowlifes and lonely single women. Having authored a longcon that factored in a spell in prison, he finds himself betrayed by his only friend and partner and, hunted by the police, unable to collect his concealed loot. Flitting from hideout to hideout, he is ultimately undone by his own pathological unease and inability to trust.

Seth Holt was the last to benefit from Balcon's habit of promoting his best technicians to director status; he'd been an editor at Ealing



since 1943. His co-writer was drama critic Kenneth Tynan, who joined Ealing as a script editor in 1956 in one of Balcon's more surprising but ultimately doomed gambits. *Nowhere to Go* was his only contribution of much substance. (Charles Barr has written a fascinating account of Tynan at Ealing in the new BFI essay collection *Ealing Revisited*).

Kicking off with a near-silent nine-minute jailbreak sequence, it's an unusually terse film, empty of romance, false optimism or moral judgement. If it's not as iconoclastic as its director hoped, *Nowhere to Go*'s analogues lie outside Ealing's walls: Jules Dassin's *Night and the City* (1950); Lewis Gilbert's *The Good Die Young* (1954). Tragically, it's probably the film's cuckoo-in-the-nest individualism that has seen it largely exiled not just from the Ealing story but from the entire 1950s canon.

Change and continuity

In May 1955, just four months after it formally acquired Ealing's studios. the BBC transmitted the first episode of Dixon of Dock Green. The Blue Lamp's assassinated PC George Dixon had made a full recovery and would patrol his beat for another 21 years, matching Balcon's Ealing for longevity. August 1955 saw the release of *The Quatermass Xperiment*, the film that marked the ascendancy of Hammer. Though torn from its old home, Ealing wasn't finished yet – The Ladykillers was released that December and there were ten more films after that. But its era was passing. In May 1956, John Osborne's Look Back in Anger opened at the Royal Court; the 1959 adaptation beat Ealing's swansong The *Siege of Pinchgut* into cinemas by three months.

Hammer – particularly after its move into colour – brought late Ealing's bloodlessness into relief, notwithstanding *The Ladykillers*: Ealing under Balcon never could or would have borne the 'X' certificate that Hammer wore so proudly. The plodding Dixon would

be a receding image in the rear-view mirrors of *Z Cars* and *The Sweeney*, a sentimentally mythologised relic of an ancient, 'nicer' England. Beside the angry young men of the 'new wave', Ealing looked old and complacent.

But the line separating the dinosaur Ealing from the sprightly mammals that supplanted it isn't so distinct. Many former Ealing hands went into television, where they left their mark on some of the more stylish and memorable filmed dramas of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, from The Adventures of Robin Hood and Danger Man to The Avengers and Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased). Seth Holt made Taste of Fear (1961), The Nanny (1965) and Blood from the Mummy's Tomb (1971) for Hammer. Dead of Night's horrorcompendium format was successfully revived by Hammer's rival Amicus in the 1960s and 70s. And Michael Balcon, as head of the BFI's Experimental Film Fund, sponsored the Free Cinema movement and later had a hand in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1960, edited by Holt) and A Taste of Honey (1961).

The passage of time and decades of daytime TV scheduling have sapped Ealing's edgier comedies of their satirical force and ironed out the differences between Barr's 'maverick' and 'mainstream' tendencies. In the end, public history can only tolerate one Ealing. But the studio's dark side is no more hidden than it ever was, even if we sometimes have to try hard to see it in its own context. As more and more of Ealing's catalogue becomes available, perhaps it's time to go back to the films themselves. §

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The season 'Ealing: Light and Dark' runs from 22 October to 30 December at BFI Southbank, London. 'It Always Rains on Sunday' is rereleased in selected UK cinemas on 26 October. 'Ealing Revisited', a new book of essays edited by Mark Duguid, Lee Freeman, Keith M. Johnston and Melanie Williams, is published by BFI/Palgrave Macmillan on 2 November

Michael Balcon

THE RED LION AND THE ROUND TABLE

A very British mogul, the head of Ealing Studios nurtured careers and encouraged collaboration, while retaining final say

By Josephine Botting

In 1938, Michael Balcon was looking to run a production company according to his own personal vision. Having run the Gainsborough and Gaumont British production companies with success, he had been hired by Louis B. Mayer to run the British end of MGM, but he hated the job. He wanted to leave big business behind and establish a cottage industry producing fewer films per year, but of much better quality. So he decamped to the 'Queen of the London Suburbs', taking up Basil Dean's mantle as head of the then troubled Ealing Studios and gathering around him a team of multi-talented collaborators, many of whom had served apprenticeships under him.

Balcon set his men a challenge: to produce films that would depict and celebrate the British spirit. As Balcon saw it, the country would soon be fighting a war against tyranny and repression, and he wanted his films to serve as a weapon in the country's crusade. He had chosen filmmakers who shared his ideals and accepted the challenge, inspired to great loyalty by their leader's benevolence and sincerity. Thus, the motto "The Studio with Team Spirit", which had adorned the wall from the time of Dean's reign, finally rang true.

Once installed at Ealing, Balcon raised the drawbridge: over the next decade, he rarely drafted in any creative talent from outside. His team was nearly entirely made up of middle-class men like himself, mostly Oxbridge-educated. Politically left of centre, they fell roughly between Balcon's Gladstonian liberalism and the militant trade unionism of producer Sidney Cole. The majority were English, with a couple of Scots and a small foreign contingent including Brazilian Alberto Cavalcanti, plus Monja Danischewsky, the studio's Russian publicity man. They made a colourful and rather eccentric group of dynamic intellectuals, and they spent their time quaffing beer and engaging in verbal jousting.

In 1944 Balcon entered into an alliance with arch-rival J. Arthur Rank. By 1946 Rank employed 31,000 people, while Ealing's workforce numbered around 400, Balcon priding himself on knowing personally all the staff on set. Despite differences in ethos between the two companies, their distribution deal was on the whole a good fit, allowing Balcon relative freedom for more than a decade. His films were financed to the tune of 50 per cent (later 75 per cent) in exchange for exclusive distribution rights for Rank. There was a mutual respect between Balcon and Rank and, on the whole, the symbiosis worked well, at least until John Davis



Light touch: Balcon prided himself on knowing all his staff personally

took over as head of Rank in 1952 and began to curb some of Ealing's quirkier instincts.

Rank had always been run on more corporate lines, its directors given little choice over the projects they were assigned and few opportunities for creative input. In contrast, Ealing's filmmakers had more freedom to develop ideas and were encouraged to come up with original projects – the trade-off being wages below the going rate. During the war, Rank offered up largely escapist fare while Balcon promoted the notion of the 'people's war', both reflecting and shaping the public mood of 'we're all in it together'. Post-war, Rank went on a crusade to conquer America, pouring money into lavish films with spectacle and stars. Balcon concentrated instead on

producing low-budget pictures, usually based on original screenplays, aiming to create a kind of 'brand loyalty' among audiences. Ironically, this tactic of making British films for British viewers won him success in America, if only on the arthouse circuit.

Differences of scale and approach pervaded every aspect of the studios. At Rank's annual dinner, employees sat at a long table with the executives at one end; all invitees were aware that their proximity to the top brass denoted their importance within the organisation. Balcon, like King Arthur, avoided this hierarchical delineation by formulating his battle plans at an enormous round table, so large it had to be constructed *in situ* in the directors' dining room. The fortnightly

meetings were attended by board members and creative staff, who gathered to present and develop ideas in a friendly, informal manner, usually over a cup of tea. Projects were then assigned to a director and producer who were given virtual carte blanche, although Balcon retained ultimate control. "There weren't any big disagreements because for good or evil the final decision was mine," he later wrote.

Although Balcon claimed he rarely vetoed a project if it had enough support from colleagues, his essential conservatism was something his team often had to circumvent in order to get their projects on the slate. Comedy was the perfect medium for doing this – subversion is often more easily disguised under a veil of humour. As early as 1944, Diana Morgan and Angus MacPhail managed to slip some very lewd jokes into their time-travel comedy *Fiddlers Three*, and the dark undertones of films like *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *The Ladykillers* reflected the worldview of their creators.

While the round-table meetings were at the heart of Ealing's creative process, according to Michael Relph, "the real power-house of Ealing Studios lay across the road in The Red Lion pub... It was there that the most animated creative discussions took place." Alcohol was an important element of studio life; T.E.B. Clarke was originally appointed as 'adviser on pubs' while Harry Watt found the only difference at Ealing after the Crown Film Unit's closure was that he "regularly drank whisky and had much less to do". Director Robert Hamer and writer Angus MacPhail, arguably Ealing's most gifted contributors, were confirmed alcoholics. Each evening at six, MacPhail would march to the Red Lion where he would sink doubles and chainsmoke until eight. He would then hurl insults at his colleagues, calling them "sycophants, whores and hypocrites" before being bundled into a car home to Bayswater, where he and Hamer lived in the same block of flats, appropriately dubbed 'Hangover Towers'.

Balcon was perhaps more benevolent lord of the manor than man of the people. He retained the three-tier system of dining rooms (board of directors, creatives and technical staff) from the Dean era and the different classes rarely mingled off-set. Harry Watt dispelled the notion of an entirely harmonious working practice, claiming: "There was fierce competition for credits...because that led to recognition, prestige, better jobs – and more money." While Balcon believed in staff development, not everyone was favoured: Henry Cornelius left after making Passport to Pimlico as Balcon felt his talent didn't lie in directing – a view he had to revise after the success of Cornelius's Genevieve. After seeing The Man in the White Suit. Balcon made Alexander Mackendrick promise that his next film would contain no trace of satire. The appointment of Kenneth Tynan in 1955 was evidence of Balcon's ability to spot talent, but he was unsure how to yoke that talent to Ealing's style of filmmaking.

Robert Hamer in particular struggled to get his projects off the ground, perhaps because his dark view of life was in conflict with Balcon's

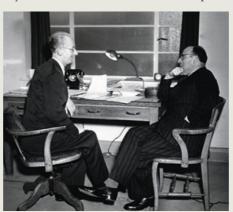


In the round: meetings at Ealing reflected Balcon's comparatively non-hierarchical approach

Sir Michael Balcon and his knights of the round table have passed into legend as protectors of the British spirit

preference for boys' own tales of adventure. Regarded as the most talented Ealing director, Hamer, John Ellis wrote, "existed at the extreme edge...[of] the community of ideas and assumptions which the studio held".

Danischewsky likened the studio structure to a family: "if Balcon was the father figure, Cavalcanti was the Nanny who brought us up." Balcon relied heavily on the Brazilian's creative flair, something he himself lacked, and Cav's keen eye and eagerness to teach made him key to the studio's success. Yet Michael Relph



Balcon, right, with screenwriter Angus MacPhail

found their collaboration surprising, regarding Cavalcanti's "homosexual bohemianism" as at odds with Balcon's fundamental conservatism. It was a family conspicuously lacking in female members. "There were women of course," wrote Relph, going on to describe his yearnings for an attractive waitress in the canteen. Balcon didn't regard women as capable of directing films; one of the few who had a creative role at Ealing was screenwriter Diana Morgan, apparently nicknamed by colleagues 'the Welsh bitch'.

While the collaborative working practice and stability of personnel at Ealing created a homogenous, recognisable product, there's no doubt that over time it led to a staleness and lack of spontaneity. Balcon himself admits that accusations of 'in-breeding' and exclusivity had some justification, and he made no excuses for the studio's resolutely middle-class view. In his defence, he expressed satisfaction that Ealing had produced films with "some sense of national pride so often missing in films of today".

However, as the war became a distant memory, the need for a consensus-driven cinema faded. By the mid-1950s, most of Balcon's band had drifted away and his paternalistic attitude and traditional view of Britain seemed old-fashioned in an increasingly consumerist society. The studio was sold in 1955 and, although production continued at Borehamwood, the heart and soul had gone out of Ealing. However, Sir Michael Balcon and his knights of the round table have passed into legend as protectors and promoters of the British spirit. §

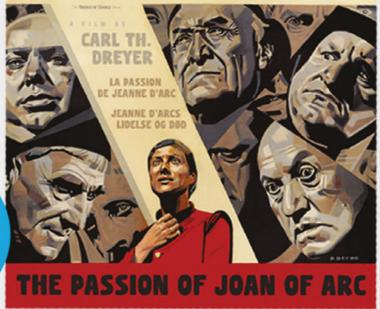
THE PASSION OF JOAN OF ARC

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Dreyer's film charts the final days of Joan of Arc as she undergoes the debasement that accompanies her trial for charges of heresy — through her imprisonment and execution at the stake.

The portrayal of Joan by Renée Maria Falconetti is frequently heralded as the all-time finest performance in the history of film, and Dreyer's unusual and virtuosic method, in seeming to render the very soul of his actress, vaulted the director decisively into the ranks of the art form's supreme geniuses. The Masters of Cinema Series is proud to present *The Passion of Joan of Arc* in its worldwide Blu-ray première, in an exclusive new restoration, presented in both 20fps and 24fps playback speeds, and featuring Dreyer's own original Danish-language intertitles.





Wide Angle

PREVIEW

BLACK FRAMES, WHITE NOISE

This year's LFF Experimenta strand salutes pure-cinema pioneer Peter Kubelka and screens his new 'duet for projectors'

By Michael Brooke



The 2012 LFF's Experimenta sidebar is headlined by Austrian veteran Peter Kubelka, both in person and via a complete retrospective, including the British

premiere of his first new film in almost a decade and Martina Kudlácek's four-hour documentary portrait *Fragments of Kubelka*.

Belying the concentrated intensity of his films (just seven between 1955 and 2003 with a total running time of about an hour), in person Kubelka is an irrepressibly garrulous polymath. Although he considers himself primarily a filmmaker, he is also co-founder of the Osterreichisches Filmmuseum (Vienna) and Anthology Film Archives (New York), a curator, archivist, lecturer, architect, musician, collector and cook – the last playing such a central role in his filmic philosophy that he once added "and Cuisine" to his formal job title of Professor of Film at the Frankfurt School of Fine Arts.

Born in Vienna in 1934, Kubelka made his first film *Mosaik im Vertrauen* in 1955, and his reputation with the 'metric films' *Adebar* (1957) and *Schwechater* (1958). Both were commissions, ostensibly promoting a nightclub and a brand of beer. The Schwechater brewery's reaction temporarily drove Kubelka into exile, but if his film failed to shift any bottles, both it and *Adebar* are remarkable examples of frame-precise audiovisual montage, turning ostensibly straightforward material (dancers, drinkers, beer, froth) into complex rhythmic and contrapuntal creations. *Unsere Afrikareise* (1966), *Pausel* (1977) and *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (2003) apply similarly intricate treatments to, respectively, a safari, the 'face art' of his friend and fellow artist Arnulf Rainer and found advertising footage.

All are screening in the LFF retrospective, but Kubelka's fourth film Arnulf Rainer (1960) is getting most attention. Named after its backer, it is one of the purest works of cinema imaginable, stripping the medium to its essentials: clear and black frames, white noise and silence. From these primitive building blocks, Kubelka created a coruscating viewing experience, offering action (flickering at varying rhythms and speeds), suspense (one or more elements sustained for long enough to create keen anticipation of their eventual interruption) and constant interplay between the audiovisual elements (sometimes in perfect synch, sometimes decidedly not). It fascinates both as a projected experience and as a physical artobject – in the BFI Southbank Atrium from 10 to 21 October, 35mm prints of Arnulf Rainer and Kubelka's latest film Antiphon will be displayed side by side, cut into strips of equal length,

making it graphically clear that the new film is the earlier one's literal opposite. According to Kubelka, "In Asian terms, it would be 'yin' and 'yang' – which means *Antiphon* exactly fills in whites where *Rainer* has blacks, and brings black where *Arnulf Rainer* is translucent light."

Both films sound like perfect digital creations – after all, their images and soundtracks are either 'on' or 'off'. However, creating *Arnulf Rainer* digitally wasn't an option in 1960. "The digital medium was not around in Vienna. I mean, it had been invented, but in Vienna there was one single computer at the time, a huge thing in the university. Nobody had a computer. And so what I invented was, in a way, a piece that could have been for computers."

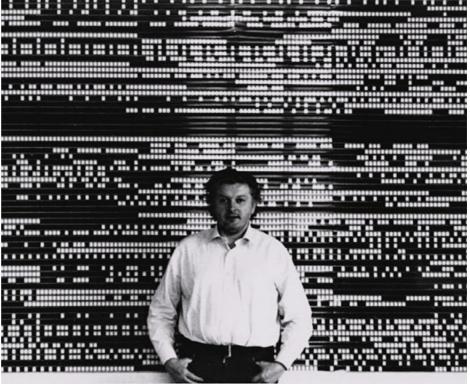
Instead, Arnulf Rainer's creation could hardly have been more traditionally artisanal. Initially unable to afford film, Kubelka first devised its rhythms on strips of paper. Both films form the centrepiece of Kubelka's Monument Film presentation, a celebration of film craftsmanship and traditional presentation as a counterblast to what he calls "the black year of film history. 2012 is the lowest point that film can go."

He elaborates: "The digital medium is not a

The digital medium gives you 'Jeanne d'Arc' or 'Day of Wrath' by Dreyer on your wristwatch under the shower



'Unsere Afrikareise'



Join the dots: the documentary 'Fragments of Kubelka' contextualises the strands of his career

smooth transition from cinema. Cinema is a completely different medium which cannot be imitated by the digital medium. My own films would have never been made if I had to work in the digital medium because I wouldn't have the wish to make them, the ideas to make them, they would not exist. It's the same thing when you work in painting or photography. When you are a photographer, you cannot talk about things about which painting can talk. All the media in the world can only say a fraction of the spectrum of what humanity is about and cinema has its own absolutely autonomous realm. Therefore it is my firm belief that it will go on, albeit in a different way. But I am so convinced it will go on that I risk the survival of my whole life's work by not permitting it to be transcribed in the digital medium, which is very hard for me because many film departments all over the world, especially in the United States, change over to the digital medium.

"Cinema is material. You can take the strip in your hand, you can look through it, and compare one single image with the next single image. You can see in your mind what these two images, A and B, will create in the brain of the viewer. You can compose a film without any additional machinery, just with a strip, or several strips, with scissors, you can cut and glue and produce a strip which then is the whole responsible object for the film event. The projector, the screen and the room are always the same. In order to give the public something which will suggest my thoughts to them, the strip is the responsible piece of material, which I can make with my bare hands. This is something which is essential for the filmmaker's ideas. Compared with the digital medium, it is restrictive, of course, because the digital medium can do all kinds of things. But the film medium in itself, the classic cinema, commands the most precious event that we have if we want to meet somebody else's thoughts. The cinema is a dark space, a protected silent space, and people sit in their seats and have to concentrate on what they get from the screen: sound and image. They cannot do something else or interactively participate in what happens: the situation does not permit distraction. And this precious situation is only there because film cannot work by daylight because it's a shadowplay. But the digital medium works in full sunlight. People can never, or only under great difficulties, restrain themselves to do whatever the medium allows. So the situation that the digital medium gives you is Jeanne d'Arc or Day of Wrath by Dreyer on your wristwatch under the shower.'

Monument Film was intentionally designed to be impossible to stage digitally. "There are four projections. Number one, Arnulf Rainer alone. Number two, Antiphon alone. Then they are projected side by side, perfectly synchronised: this will be the 'yin' and 'yang'. The fourth projection is both films superimposed. Theoretically, you should have continuous light and continuous sound, but when you see it on the screen, the structure of Arnulf Rainer and Antiphon comes out perfectly. It's not continuous because the colour of the projectors' light is a little bit different. Each



Cinema is material: Kubelka takes a tactile approach to film

of the projectors has its own speaker in front of the images on the screen. For the fourth projection, the speakers are moved into the centre; they are side by side. But since there are no two speakers equal, you again have the structure. You could call it a duet for projectors."

To emphasise this aspect, the projectors will be installed within the auditorium. "With this film, I want to work out the consciousness of the cinema event for the audience and therefore I prefer it not to be projected from the booth. In classic film projection, you have to have a human being to focus and to set the sound and to rethread and rewind. It's a bit like playing a piano. The projectionist is the bridge between the public and the medium. So I do not try to

just create a fantasy in the heads of the viewers, I want the viewers to be conscious that they are in the presence of a material medium.

The film strip is also shown to the public. It's a special part of this event that they will also hold it in their hands. I have not done a public showing yet, but in Vienna we had a complete testing and it was perfect – they were able to synch the films and it's overwhelming." §

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'Monument Film' is in the Atrium, BFI Southbank, London from 10 to 21 October, and Peter Kubelka gives a lecture screening in NFT1 on 21 October. His own films and 'Fragments of Kubelka' play at the ICA, London on 11 and 13 October respectively

ALLA DREAM

Fascinations with sexual desire and tortured dreamscapes link Lang's *The Woman in the Window* and Kubrick's *Eves Wide Shut*

By Paul Mayersberg

At first glance, Fritz Lang's *The Woman in the Window* (1944) has nothing in common with Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). In Lang's film, Professor Wanley (Edward G. Robinson), an academic criminal psychologist, says goodbye to his wife and young son, who are going on a vacation. Entering his club, he admires a portrait of a woman in a gallery window. After dinner, he dozes in an armchair reading Biblical erotica (Solomon's 'Song of Songs'), having instructed a steward to wake him at 10.30. On his way out, looking again at the portrait, the reflection of a woman (Joan Bennett) appears in the window. She tells him she is the real-life subject.

Hesitant but tempted, Wanley agrees to have a drink at her apartment. A man bursts in, flies into a jealous rage and murderously attacks him. In desperation, Wanley stabs him to death. Frightened to go to the police, he and the woman wrap the body and he dumps it in a forest. The next day, the body is found. One of Wanley's club friends is the District Attorney, who has taken charge of the case. In the days that follow, the professor inadvertently reveals details only the murderer could know.

In Eyes Wide Shut, Bill Harford (Tom Cruise), a New York doctor, is shocked into jealousy by his wife Alice (Nicole Kidman) when she confesses an encounter with a stranger that overwhelmed her with unfulfilled desire. We have no reason to doubt Alice, as we had no reason to doubt the woman in the window, but both are starting-points for stories that link sexual desire to tortured dream states.

Wanley has done something bad; Dr Harford has done nothing bad. But both feel guilt.
Lang's is a classical narrative of inevitability.
Kubrick's is a journey into uncertainty.
They turn out to be improbably similar.

Dr Harford is drawn into a series of encounters with women: an overdose victim, a hooker and her flatmate, the amorous daughter of a dead friend and a mysterious naked woman who appears at a masked orgy he has gate-crashed, saves him from an unspecified threat and apparently dies because of it. Women here can both enslave and save their men. This doctor knows all about women's bodies but nothing about their inner feelings. Professor Wanley is also an ignorant expert, a criminologist with no idea how to get away with his own crime. His world is male. A chance encounter with a single woman can drive him towards suicide. Harford, engulfed by women, heads towards the destruction of his marriage.

The casting in both films is conspicuously ironic. Think of Edward G. Robinson's lurid past as a murderous gangster and Tom Cruise's role of impossible action man. Wanley is an adolescent inside an old fogey, which is why he doesn't see that the woman is just a dame



Free association: Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman in Stanley Kubrick's 'Eyes Wide Shut'

on the make. Harford's youthful body houses an old fool tempted by young women. If Wanley is troubled by the impotence of old age, Harford is disturbed by all women and by men who take him for gay. There is something dandyish if not feminine in his coif and long, flaring topcoat. Is this the male mystique that so perplexes the alcohol- and drug-induced common sense of the doctor's wife?

Eyes Wide Shut could have become a Brian De Palma thriller but stays fairly faithful to Arthur Schnitzler's Viennese Dream Story (1926). Kubrick relocates the story of tested fidelity to a studio-made Gotham seen largely by night in splashed colour-noir reminiscent of Minnelli's MGM movies. The interiors are glistening gold waterfalls and moonlight blue, a nod to Klimt's bourgeois kitsch. The film was to be the last of Kubrick's satires: Jews played by Wasps at Christmas, inane dialogue routinely repeated, a percussive piano for suspense, an ersatz Vienna waltz for irony, overacted cameo parts all delivered so straight it fooled critics who took the film for seriously bad. In the last scene, set in a children's toyshop of fantasy and fetish, Alice sums up the unerotic eroticism with the words: "Let's just fuck." The film is a tantalising but risky experiment in narrative misdirection.

Lang's film shapes up as a tale of sexual obsession but turns into a story of crime and



I'll be your mirror: 'The Woman in the Window'

A doctor who knows about women's bodies but not their feelings; a criminologist unable to conceal evidence of his crime

punishment. Lang has no taste for camp filmmaking games. He has a diamond-hard narrative, nothing picaresque, geometric portrait-mirror framing, no dreamy camera movement, no naked bodies but stripped down sets, no masks but unchanging costumes. *The Woman in the Window* is watchmaking: clocks tick relentlessly, footprints and tyre marks incriminate, a wound cannot be concealed. It has the lucidity of Greek drama set against a Freudian puzzle of interpretation.

Where Lang is rigorous, Kubrick is diverting. His characters are often half-dressed, half-aware of their confused identities. Harford's mask from the orgy of repression inexplicably appears on his wife's bed. Did he bring it home by mistake, a slip or a covert need to confess? Or did Alice, inseparable from her looking-glass, imagine her husband's idea of wonderland? Freud, surely our greatest detective, said no human being can keep a secret.

"It's 10.30, Professor." Impossible to guess the secret of Lang's film until Wanley, at the point of death, is woken by the club steward. Yes, it was all his dream. A happy ending cop-out? Or an insight into life-threatening anxiety? It was Lang who devised the dream frame in *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919).

If Wanley has been on the rack of fate, Harford has been on Dr K's couch, which doubles for his marital bed. Kubrick's subversive scatter-shot video game is clearly personal. His father was a doctor and wanted his son to follow him. Schnitzler was a doctor in Vienna. Kubrick's grandparents were Austrian, but Lang's fearful symmetry of guilt is finally more Berlin – his true home – than Vienna, his birthplace. §

BRADLANDS

SEE YOU LAST TUESDAY

Two early 1970s gems starring Tuesday Weld offer a welcome corrective to the period's general marginalisation of women

By Brad Stevens

Although most cinephiles fondly recall their earliest visits to the cinema, with its rapt audiences and large screens, my own memories of childhood filmgoing are generally negative: the obligatory Disney features, Saturday mornings spent watching Children's Film Foundation atrocities and family outings which involved seeing either a James Bond film or, this being the 1970s, a disaster movie (including Jaws, now rarely discussed in terms of its relationship to the disaster cycle). Needless to say, there were some bright spots: a revival of 2001: A Space Odyssey and a double bill pairing the Terence Hill/Bud Spencer comedy Watch Out, We're Mad with Paul Bartel's Cannonball (retitled *Carquake*). But the films that made the deepest impression were those I saw on the small screen. In part, this was due to my parents' decision to rent a VCR in 1980, something that totally changed the way I related to moving images. Films, those ephemeral things that moved from beginning to end at their own pace before vanishing into the mists of memory, now became concrete objects - like books - which could be recorded on VHS cassettes, placed on a shelf and referred to at leisure. Thanks to television and the VCR, I was able to view and re-view films which, at the age of 13, I'd have been 'protected' from theatrical exposure to. I was fortunate to be developing a serious interest in cinema at a time when the BBC functioned like an intelligently programmed repertory theatre, with retrospectives dedicated to Orson Welles, Francesco Rosi and Luis Buñuel accompanied by newly commissioned documentaries. For me, the biggest revelation was 'The Great American Picture Show', a season dedicated to US films from 1969 to 1975 that appeared on BBC2 in 1980. The titles, in order of screening, were as follows: Badlands, The Conversation, Thieves Like Us, Five Easy Pieces, The Sugarland Express, Diary of a Mad Housewife, American Graffiti, Smile, The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid, Klute, Scarecrow, Electra Glide in Blue, Night Moves, Love and Death, Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore, Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia, The Last Picture Show, Midnight Cowboy, The Godfather and Nashville.

These films were my introduction to an adult world I'd barely been aware of, let alone seen tackled on screen. Though still in my mid-teens, I seem to have intuitively understood that Robert Altman, Alan J. Pakula, Arthur Penn, Martin Scorsese, Terrence Malick and Sam Peckinpah were not only radically opposed to America's dominant trends but were developing new styles of filmmaking to express this opposition. It was several years before I grasped the debt these 'new' styles (particularly Francis Coppola's) owed to European sources, and came to appreciate that Vincente Minnelli, Alfred Hitchcock and Douglas Sirk were every



Stuck in the middle: Tuesday Weld, centre, in 'A Safe Place' with Jack Nicholson, right

bit as critical of American society (and usually less complacent in their rejection of it). What now bothers me about these films is the way in which, with a few significant exceptions, they tend to marginalise women. But I recently had the pleasure of discovering two magnificent works from the early 1970s about female protagonists (played in both cases by Tuesday Weld) attempting to assert their independence in a patriarchal society whose structures are inherently hostile to such a project: Henry Jaglom's A Safe Place (1971) and Frank Perry's *Play It As It Lays* (1972). It is surely significant that these titles fell into distribution limbo at a time when such male-centred films as Five Easy Pieces (in which Jack Nicholson demonstrates his nonconformist individuality by insulting a waitress) and American Graffiti (so uninterested in its female characters that it excludes them from a concluding summary of the protagonists' later lives) were being hailed as masterpieces.

A Safe Place is now available as part of Columbia's BBS box set, but Play It As It Lays remains inaccessible, aside from a few screenings on US cable channels. It doesn't seem to have played theatrically in the UK and has never been released on video or DVD anywhere. Closely adapted from Joan Didion's novel, the film's achievement is in no small part due to its casting. The central characters are Maria Wyeth, an actress on the verge of cracking up, played by Tuesday Weld, and bisexual Hollywood producer B.Z., played by Anthony Perkins. After reading the book, I had difficulty

'Play It As It Lays' finds common ground between gay male and 'non-feminine' female experiences of oppression imagining Perkins in this role, but he imbues it with a warmth only hinted at on the page.

Whether consciously or not, Perry's casting decisions seem to have been influenced by his actors' private lives: Weld might easily have served as the model for Didion's protagonist (as she later did for a character in Robert Stone's Children of Light) while, as far as I'm aware, this is the only time the bisexual Perkins was permitted overtly to express his real sexual identity onscreen. The main concern of the film (though not, I think, the novel) is the way in which the gay male (B.Z. wears feminine cut-off shorts at several points) and the female who resists pressure to behave in an appropriately 'feminine' manner (Maria wears jeans or trousers in all but two scenes) form a relationship whose relaxed intimacy is based on a shared experience of oppression - an intimacy Weld and Perkins convey with an apparently effortless ease that may be a consequence of their having already acted together in Noel Black's Pretty Poison (1968). It has to be admitted that some of the supporting performances are relatively inert: Adam Roarke, for example, is adequate as Maria's filmmaker husband but lacks the authenticity of the two leads; casting a genuine director such as John Cassavetes or Dennis Hopper in this part might have taken the film onto a whole other level.

But it would be foolish to quibble about a work whose flaws are part of its appeal, leaving it helplessly adrift amidst mainstream American cinema's more 'professionally' manufactured output. We are only just beginning to gain enough hindsight to evaluate this unquestionably remarkable period of filmmaking: if *Play It As It Lays* were more widely known, it would surely be regarded as a key title in the history of New American Cinema. §

The elusive search for silence and solitude underpins a new film that gently teases out the paradoxes of absence

By Frances Morgan



In the centenary year of composer John Cage's birth, it seems everyone has something to say in answer to the question he posed in a 1958 lecture: "Is there such

a thing as silence?" "Too much quietness'll drive a fellow mad," reflects a hotel barman in Pat Collins's *Silence*, which screens at the BFI London Film Festival next month. A meditation on sound, memory and place, the film follows a softly spoken sound recordist, played by cowriter Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde, who wields a mic on a stand rather like a pilgrim would a staff as he treks through bleak and beautiful Irish locations as part of a vague professional assignment to record spaces "away from manmade sound". The near-impossibility of the task suggests that it's the search for silence that grips, obsesses and outwits more than quiet itself, or, as a poet's voiceover states more elegantly: "The mind turns upon silence."

Silence deliberately blurs the lines between documentary and fiction: Mac Giolla Bhríde's character is also named Eoghan; the story takes the actor to Tory, an island off the north-west coast of Donegal near his own birthplace; other cast members, such as novelist Michael Harding and museum keeper Marie Coyne, appear as themselves, interviewed by Mac Giolla Bhríde; and footage from national archives is interspersed throughout. These shifting realities are reflected in the ambiguities encountered by Eoghan on his journey, which is not the straightforward search for quiet ambience you might expect. Summoned from a noisy Berlin back to his homeland, his work takes on a more personal resonance as he sifts through the sounds not only of his surroundings but also of his own past. The outdoor locations, from woodlands to remote islands, are teeming with natural sound, but they are also interrupted by human presences whose voices claim our attention. Some are seen and some remain out of sight. They are often older voices, some speaking in English, others in Irish; all are as much part of the landscape as corncrakes calling and waves breaking on the shore of Inishbofin. Others sing – traditional sean-nós, with its lilting minor melodies, is the music that most illuminates Silence and cuts through time, via old tape recordings (including one of Mac Giolla Bhríde's mother Nellie, a writer and folk singer) and snatches of half-remembered verses sung quietly after dinner in an old house, almost dropped into conversation. Some, like Harding, debate the nature of silence itself, and the various terms for it in the Irish language. It seems that silence cannot be left alone.

The idealisation of remoteness, of depopulated or liminal spaces, and of the man (it's rarely a woman) wandering or living



Prick up your ears: Pat Collins's 'Silence' follows a sound recordist around Ireland

among them, is one that periodically surfaces in film, art and literature, currently evident in the work of Iain Sinclair, Patrick Keiller, Ben Rivers, Wild Places author Robert Macfarlane and W.G. Sebald, the subject of Grant Gee's recent documentary, Patience (After Sebald). At first, I thought Silence might be little more than an aurally impressive addition to this growing canon, with a sound team including BBC wildlife recordist Chris Watson, but there is something gently provocative about the way Collins and co-writer Mac Giolla Bhríde use sound to set up a tension between the need for solitude and the responsibility to hear, speak, bear witness to human history. Ruined houses glimpsed across a bay seem picturesque, but a fisherman's story of mass economic migration is a corrective to romanticising their decay. Eoghan describes childhood evenings spent following his father's often dangerous fishing trips via CB radio, an evocative image of sound and its attendant technology connecting humans across the wilderness of the sea. There's humour, too, in this quest for aloneness: at one point, a hiker clumps across a barren moorland to ask what the recordist is up to. "I'm not disturbing you?" he says, cheerily. After Eoghan explains he's charting places without people, the other man says, "Sure, you're here..."

Silence's settings are brought to life with stark beauty by cinematographer Richard Kendrick, who captures great rain-soaked skies and deep blue dusks as well as the grainy, weathered surfaces of walls and rocks. But amid this visual feast, the slight narrative is strengthened by having someone at its centre

When the film's lead tells a hiker on a barren moor he's charting places without people, he replies: 'Sure, you're here...'

who thinks primarily through his ears and who is seen clearly to mediate the world around him through mics and headphones. Who better to explore the indefinable nature of silence than someone whose job it is to create the impression of it on a daily basis? Film sound recordists regularly make ambiences known as room tones or buzz tracks, recordings of the location for editors to use in post-production. David Lynch is often quoted on his fondness for and manipulation of room tone, which thickens to a menacing hum in *Lost Highway* in particular,



I want to be alone: 'Silence'



but its role is usually to be unnoticeable – to give an impression of non-sound that doesn't feel out of the ordinary. Sudden, shocking silence – which very rarely happens in reality – is used in film to indicate trauma, dislocation, something gone terribly wrong (imitating the temporary deafness caused by an explosion is a device used in a number of films, including Jacques Audiard's *A Prophet* and Elem Klimov's *Come and See*); or as a kind of cinematic intake of breath, a top-of-the-rollercoaster moment, signifying a quick pause before something loud, fast or terrifying happens.

There are none of these silences in *Silence*. It is less a film about the absence of sound than one about how sound cannot ever really be absent. The sequences of Silence that do not feature field recordings or interviews but collages of music, archive recordings and diegetic sound are a reminder of how sound can evoke memory in a way that would be crass and unwieldy were it expressed visually, say as a flashback. When Eoghan returns to Tory, he explores an old house. It's ravaged by damp and time, decrepit bits of furniture still standing as if left in a hurry. This should be the quietest place of all, but the soundtrack to this sequence is one of faint conversations and kitchen sounds - the hubbub of family life. It is not clear whether Eoghan is recalling his own life in the house or imagining its inhabitants of centuries ago, but the implication is that memories are among the hardest manmade sounds to turn down or tune out. 9

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'Silence' plays at the BFI London Film Festival on 13, 18 & 20 October

PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA

Silent-era censors' savvy balancing of various pressures paved the way for today's light-touch classification



By Bryony Dixon

Adrian Brunel's witty spoof on early film censorship, 'Cut it Out: A Day in the Life of a Censor' (1925), sees a top-hatted gent with a rule book getting in the way of exasperated cast and crew, measuring skirt lengths, rescuing a young lady being tied to railway tracks and taking the shears to a scene of a soldier "bleeding profusely" while engaging in "horrific" acts of war. It's a conventional and superficial view of the censor's supposed prudishness - images of an Edwardian gentleman, magnifying glass in hand, scrutinising ladies' buxom bottoms, come all too easily to mind. The real story of early film censorship is a lot less cute but a lot more interesting - and, given its concerns with sex, drugs, politics and crime, topical.

The story of the first 100 years of film censorship and classification is one of British society maturing. Compared to a century ago, adults can now watch a relatively broad range of content, with censorship applied principally on the basis of age. Tracing the journey from rigorous restriction to a lighter touch may be relevant to debates on media censorship at a time when untrammelled aesthetic expression can become a pretext for killing (see the recent furore over the 'Innocence of Muslims' video posted to YouTube). Progress is certainly not universal: China's draconian 13-point film censorship guidelines, issued last December, bear more than a passing resemblance to Britain's 43-point list from 1917. China's list, for example, forbids films that "distort the civilisation and history of China"; the British list from 1917 cited as "grounds for deletion" scenes "bringing into disrepute British prestige in the Empire".

Things have changed, but the basic concerns about the content or effect of films are broadly the same. Restrictions are often presented in the context of child protection: China's State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, for instance, claimed their new guidelines were "creating a more harmonious and green film environment for the public. especially children". But the British experience teaches us that a one-size-fits-all policy works no better for film censorship than for anything else: it makes children of us all. As Quentin Thomas, outgoing President of the BBFC, put it in 'Dear Censor', made for BBC's 'Timeshift' in 2011: "For the first 40 years or so there was no provision for a mandatory age classification... This meant that every film was in principal judged suitable to be viewed by everyone... But this is not a recipe for a medium that can address serious adult concerns."

As Thomas goes on to explain, the shift from censorship to classification based on age allowed cinema to engage expressively with the adult world without exposing youngsters to troubling material. But this ostensibly preferable model relies on a society that trusts its adult citizens to deal thoughtfully and responsibly with contentious subject-matter – hardly a distinctive feature of the Edwardian establishment.

As time passed, individual cases tested and refined the system, but the loss of the BBFC's files from the period has made documenting this process problematic. Over the past year, however, the BFI and the BBFC have been winkling out details of century-old censor-baiting titles. Perhaps surprisingly, several are extant in the BFI's Archive.

One of the first films ever to be censored in the UK was a bullfighting film - animal cruelty being a perennial national bugbear while the comedy 'Billy's Burglar' (1912) was deemed perhaps too practical a demonstration of breaking and entering. 'Damaged Goods' (1919), a film about the dangers of passing on venereal disease, is uncut and still, as far as I know, technically banned. From the 1920s, we have the cut version of 'Maisie's Marriage' (1923), loosely based on Marie Stopes's pioneering book on birth control, and a fragment of the sensational 'Cocaine' (1922), concerning teenage drug-taking and trafficking - and possibly inspired by the true story of the fabulously named 'Brilliant Chang'. The censoring of 'Dawn' (1928) - the true story of a nurse, Edith Cavell, who was shot by the Germans as a spy - provoked a diplomatic furore after the film was cut due to government concerns about anti-German sentiment. (It will soon be restored to its uncut version.) Still, obviously politically motivated censorship was rare, an apparent exception being the banning of 'Battleship Potemkin' in 1926 in the wake of the General Strike. If the censor thought that viewing the film would cause the lower classes to overthrow their government, that would truly be to treat them like children.

Such films are revealing about the morality of the early 20th century and, from the documentary evidence we have, we can see that the censors dealt with the issues in an intelligent way, treading a wary path through the minefield of different opinions and interests. Perhaps they are partly to thank for the fact that, a century on, we still have an independent classification office rather than state censorship.



'Cut It Out: A Day in the Life of a Censor'

PAINT IT BLACK



Blasts, drones and vibrations: the many faces of Aldo Tambellini

Aldo Tambellini – radical renaissance man of 1960s New York – finally gets his due at Tate Modern's Tanks

By Agnieszka Gratza

Until a spate of recent film and video retrospectives rescued his name from obscurity, Aldo Tambellini was virtually unknown except among a few diehards in New York. His neglect might partly be explained by his decision to leave the city that had been his muse in 1976, following a period of intense activity in the 1960s that culminated in the Black Film Series - a sequence of boldly experimental black-and-white shorts deploying a range of cameraless techniques and equally inventive, noise-ridden soundtracks - and the dazzling Electromedia environments, which fused different art and media forms and influenced Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable, among others. While Tambellini's outspoken criticism of American policies and institutions - including the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim and the Whitney

Museum, which he accused of turning art into commodities and financial investments – did not endear him to the (art) establishment at the time, it took on a new resonance in the climate of social and political unrest leading up to and generated by Occupy Wall Street.

Rather than simply furthering his own career, Tambellini poured much of his energy into fostering links among artists and the racially mixed (mainly Puerto Rican and African-American) community of the Lower East Side, where he settled in 1959 with his partner, Elsa. As editor and publisher of The Screw, a radical newsletter written in poetry form, and founder of the countercultural artists' collective Group Center (whose members included anarchists such as the painter Ben Morea), he organised colourful protests directed at major museums and galleries, anti-Vietnam War rallies, exhibitions, poetry readings, jazz concerts and film screenings, contributing to the establishment of the Lower East Side as the new Bohemian destination.

In 1966, Aldo and Elsa Tambellini opened the Gate Theatre on 10th Street and 2nd Avenue, in protest against "Lincoln Center's alarmingly superficial representation of American

independent filmmakers". An "underground cinema" (as the sign above the entrance spelled out), the Gate set out to promote avant-garde films by emerging filmmakers with the aim of making their work available to the general public rather than a more select audience. It was open every day, charged modest admission fees and had a changing weekly programme of films by the likes of Kenneth Anger, Jack Smith, Stan Brakhage, Bruce Conner, Maya Deren and the Kuchar brothers. Brian De Palma's first feature film *The Wedding Party* (1969), co-directed with his theatre teacher Wilford Leach and starring the then-unknown Robert De Niro, was among the experimental films premiered there.

A group of black poets who regularly met across the street from where the Tambellinis lived – some of whom would take part in the collaborative Electromedia events – published the magazine *Umbra*, dedicated to exploring black identity issues at a time when racial conflict was rife in the city. Black Power and the civil-rights movement were among the causes that Tambellini himself came to champion. Black Trip 2 (1967) - one of seven titles in the Black Film Series (1965-9), which range from three to 14 minutes – has a soundtrack of children chanting 'Black is beautiful' to the beat of drums as abstract white shapes and patterns flit in and out of view against a jet-black background, with occasional filmed footage of charging cavalrymen and other scenes from revolutionary Russia thrown into the mix. Shot with a handheld camera, Black Plus X(1967), from the same series, alternates images of amusement-park rides with beach scenes, in which black children and teens bathing at Coney Island appear in negative image, so that black effectively becomes white and vice versa.

Race-related issues subtend Tambellini's fascination with blackness as a complex aesthetic, metaphysical and political concept, reflected in the titles of his films and in the near-exclusive use of this non-colour, starkly contrasted with white, in the decade or so following his move to the city. (Colour does feature, usually in monochrome, in later 'Cathodic Works' like 6637 or Clone, made in 1973 and in 1976 respectively.) "There was something 'black' in New York," he confides in the autobiographical account A Syracuse Rebel in New York. "It became spontaneous to work in black." More than just a pigment and a skin colour, the banner of rebellion and anarchy, for Tambellini black is the beginning and end of things, the womb and the cosmos, an entity to which he attributes generative and destructive powers. Black Is (1965), Tambellini's fourminute-long first film – made without a camera by painting on the celluloid and manipulating it by scratching, scraping and doing all manner of violence to the filmstrip - has images of cell-like formations, protoplasm, starbursts, splotches and brushstrokes reminiscent of cave or action painting, projected at 30 frames per second to the sound of an amplified heartbeat.

Though born in Syracuse, New York, in 1930, to parents of Italian-Brazilian origin, Tambellini grew up in Italy, returning to the

Tambellini broke new ground in cameraless filmmaking, multimedia events and underground exhibition

US to study painting and sculpture shortly after the end of World War II. The area where he lived in Lucca had been bombed during the war, killing many of his friends and neighbours, and the experience left a mark on his work. Concentric circles, points of impact, targets and searchlights frequently crop up in the Black Film Series, matched by the noise of air-raid sirens, explosions, blasts, drones and vibrations, especially in Blackout (1965), Black TV (1968) and Minus One (1969), which interweaves sounds of children singing and clapping hands with machine-gunfire and the countdown of a rocket launch. At once energizing and numbing, the constant onslaught of visual and aural information leaves one shell-shocked.

Two years of TV news broadcasts "compressed into a staccato barrage of sight and sound" is how Gene Youngblood describes Black TV in his landmark Expanded *Cinema* (1970). The most brutal and perhaps the most accomplished in the Black Film Series, constantly re-edited over the course of four years, Black TV won the Grand Prix at the Oberhausen Film Festival in 1969. The split-screen video, shot with a 16mm camera, appropriates haunting footage of, among other things, Robert Kennedy's assassination with reporter Andrew West commenting live on the scene in replay mode. Some of this material feeds into Black Gate Cologne (1968), the first artist-made TV broadcast of a happening that showed members of the audience interacting with giant polyethylene tubing suspended from the ceiling. Produced in collaboration

In 1967, Tambellini and Piene co-founded the Black Gate theatre. Located directly above the Gate Theatre cinema, the new space

with Zero Group member Otto Piene, who had made the helium-inflated installation, it was recorded in a Cologne TV studio using a video mixer and professional TV equipment.



'Black', Electromedia performance 1967

was specifically dedicated to multimedia performances and installations merging different artistic forms – dance, film, painting, light projections, kinetic sculpture – for which Tambellini coined the term 'electromedia'. It was on Piene's invitation that Tambellini left New York to take up a fellowship at the MIT Center for Advanced Visual Studies that lasted from 1976 to 1984. Though he continued to collaborate with other artists on various experimental TV programs and news broadcasts in the decades that followed his move to Boston, Tambellini increasingly turned to writing and performing his poetry. This shift in creative focus perhaps accounts more than anything else for the fact that Tambellini's legacy has not hitherto received due attention. The growing appetite among museum-goers for immersive, multi-sensory environments and alternative types of projection has also created a more receptive audience for the artist's startlingly original output.

The current revival of interest in Tambellini's intermedia practice – which started with modest retrospectives of his films and videos at New York's HOWL festival in 2003-5 and at the Anthology Film Archives in 2008, followed by a restaged performance of Black Zero (1965) at PERFORMA 09 in 2009 - owes much to Pia Bolognesi and Giulio Bursi, who delivered this year's comprehensive film retrospective at Paris's Centre Pompidou and curated, with Tate Modern's film curator Stuart Comer, Aldo *Tambellini: Retracing Black* (9-14 October), which takes place inside the Tanks. Tate Modern's recently unveiled underground space adjoining the Turbine Hall lends itself superbly to screening the Black Film Series and restaging some of the historical Electromedia events, Black Zero and Moondial among them. Given the prevalence of circular, cell-like motifs that course through these dark films and videos last shown in the UK at a Leeds retrospective in 2007 – Tambellini's body of work seems tailor-made to show off the round, pitchblack, secret chambers that are the Tanks. §

'Aldo Tambellini: Retracing Black' is at the Tanks at Tate Modern, from 9 to 14 October



'Black Gate

NEWS AND EVENTS

- Lindsey Seers's mesmerising film installation for Artangel, entitled 'Nowhere Less Now', was conceived specially for a 19th-century. Grade IIlisted corrugated-iron chapel in Kilburn, known locally as 'The Tin Tabernacle'. It combines photography, performance, video and animation in its exploration of image-making media, seafaring and migration. Showing several times daily, Wednesday to Sunday, until 21 October. www.artangel.org.uk
- Black Huts Festival a brand-new festival of writing, poetry and film in Hastings, hatched by Andrew Kötting and Nicholas Johnson – includes film work by Chris Petit and Iain Sinclair ('Asylum'), Timothy Neat ('Play Me Something'), Rebecca E. Marshall and Nicola Bruce ('I Am Weather'), Roland Jarvis and Kötting himself. Apart from Neat, all the films shown are made by filmmakers living and working on the South Coast. Various venues in Hastings, 2-4 November. www.e-truscan.co.uk
- Filmaktion was the name used by a group of filmmakers who worked together during an intense period of activity in the early 1970s - core members Malcolm Le Grice, William Raban, Gill Eatherley and Annabel Nicolson are major figures in the development of experimental film in the UK. A week-long series of events in the Tanks will revisit some of Filmaktion's key performances and installations and celebrate the group's radical reshaping of the experience of film and the cinematic viewing space. www.tate.org.uk



- BFI London Film Festival's Experimenta section this year is packed with desirable items, most notably a rare opportunity to see work by Jerome Hiler, in a double bill with two films by Nathaniel Dorsky, with whom he shares a heightened sense of wonder at the world. Hiler builds sensuous layers of superimposition at the moment of shooting, and until recently only showed his work as camera originals. This screening of 'Words of Mercury' (above) is his first digital transfer. www.bfi.org.uk
- Laida Lertxundi, the Bilbao-born filmmaker, continues a long and fascinating tradition of European directors engaging with Los Angeles. Her short 16mm works map physical and psychological geographies while experimenting with cinematic conventions. ICA, London, 23 October. www.ica.org.uk

WIDE ANGLE LOST AND FOUND KILLER B

Closed Circuit, made for Italian television in the 1970s but set inside a cinema, hints at the murderous power of the movies

By David Cairns

OK, wise guy. What were you doing on the night in question?

I was watching a film. A perfectly harmless— So you were watching a film. What film? Um, it was called Closed Circuit. Never heard of it.

It's an Italian film, from the 70s. Not available on DVD. I wouldn't expect you to— Tell me all about it.

Well, it's not easy to describe—*Try.*

Well, it played Berlin in 1978, but it's actually a TV movie. Made during that half-hour when Italian TV was making interesting stuff like Bertolucci's *The Spider's Stratagem*. A time capsule from before Berlusconi.

He mixed up in this too?

No, thankfully. Anyhow, it's all set inside a cinema—

Thought you said it was a TV movie?

It is. Set in a cinema. And for the first half-hour nothing much happens. People come in, we get glimpses of the staff, the routines, the different kinds of characters. But it's fascinating because the filmmaker – Giuliano Montaldo, who's still working today – shoots everything with a wonderfully fluid moving camera and a choreographed approach to action. Plus the sound, all post-dubbed in the Italian manner, creates a sense of everything happening just as it should. Like fate is running smoothly.

The movie being screened is a spaghetti western. And there's something very nostalgic for me about the way that widescreen image gets crimped and cropped by shooting through doorways or blocking the screen with a foreground character. It's like when I was a kid and saw Sergio Leone movies for the first time and they were panned and scanned on the BBC, sliced down from 2.35:I to I.33:I. You could see this was wide, expansive cinema, but it was oddly telescoped. It seemed like a kid's-eye view, watching the world from under a table or behind a couch.

Anyhow, the focus on bit-players, the artificial sound and the plotlessness sort of recall Tati. But then somebody gets shot. A middle-aged cinephile comes in late, sits down and gets a bullet in the heart. There's panic. The cops arrive and stop everyone leaving. They make a search but can't find any gun. They interview everyone but can't find any motive.

It's a cop movie?

Well, the young detective in charge is as close to the lead as the movie has. And I guess it's kind of a *giallo*, but without the sex and gore. It expands on the weird self-reflexive quality you get in some *gialli*. But the weird thing is, all this set-up hasn't established anything that could make for a plot, anything that could lead to murder. So they decide to stage a re-enactment. An excitable usher takes the







Don't look now: 'Closed Circuit'

The audience are freaked. A sociologist has a theory. The police won't listen — but he finds a bullet hole in the screen...

dead man's role, they start the film again and at the exact same moment, just as a climactic gunshot goes off on screen, the usher gets shot.

Uh-huh. A serial killer.

Well, here's the thing. The audience members are really freaked now. The sense of entrapment and repetition recalls Bunuel's *The Exterminating Angel*, even down to the media circus gathering outside the cinema. Now one geeky guy, a sociologist, comes to the cops with a hare-brained theory. They won't listen, but he does find a bullet hole in the movie screen. A

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

"As an eccentric meditation on the destructive power of celluloid, 'Closed Circuit's quality is undeniable, with a climactic sequence that displays considerable imagination and audacity in its depiction of real and reel world characters interacting. In this manner the film ranks with similarly themed classics like 'Sherlock Jr', Ivan Zulueta's 'Arrebato' and David Cronenberg's 'Videodrome' – high praise indeed!"

Adam Groves, Fright.com

"This made-for-TV giallo has the makings of a brilliant film but sadly its greatest asset is also its biggest weakness. The film explores the power of cinema, particularly the influence of screen violence, in a novel way. The puzzle is perplexing. The resolution is what will divide people because it is so at odds with the rest of the film."

Adam Cook, Letterboxd.com

search behind the screen fails to find anything, but this arrogant police chief who's come in— Careful, buddy.

This arrogant police chief insists on another re-enactment, to prove they really have the crime scene pinned down now — that the killer can't possibly do it again. Because, maybe, the cops are starting to dread that the sociologist is right. There's a superstitious terror in the air, a feeling that the movie may be a *film maudit*.

A film mud-?

A cursed film. See, the sociologist is suggesting that the movie killed the first guy. And, having adjusted itself to that fact, it will now repeat the action whenever it's projected. Because it's a movie and movies are always the same each time you watch them. Or they're supposed to be. And, you see, we know he's right, because the movie hasn't set up any crazy killer or villain who could possibly be the real guilty party.

So they stage the final re-enactment. And even if we now see it coming, Montaldo pulls out all the stops. Just as the forensics guy arrives with the news that the first bullet came from a Civil War Colt, the projectionist finds his projector won't stop and the police chief panics as the big cowboy on the screen tracks him across the auditorium with his giant pistol. It has the same kind of hilarious, scary panic as the Ed 209 bit in *Robocop* (1987).

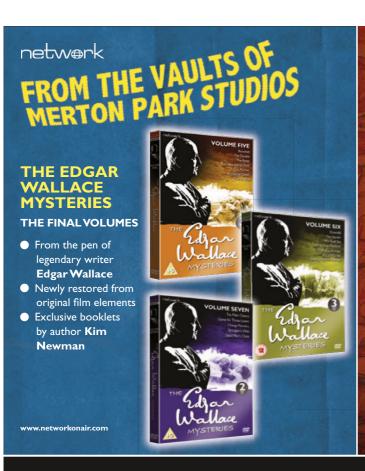
See, once the film has become a killer, it can't stop. Because what happens in a film always happens the same way, each time. And maybe that's why everything in this movie feels so choreographed, so fated. Rewatching a movie gives us an overview of predestination and prophecy.

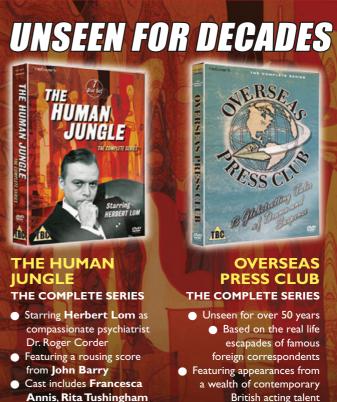
And it's all about, basically, the power of the image.

That's the screwiest thing I ever heard. I don't believe there is such a movie.

But I–

Take him away. 😚





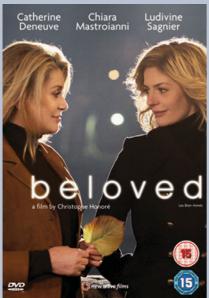
ON DVD THIS OCTOBER

and Alfred Burke



new wave films on DVD





Available 22 October on DVD and download

• DVD includes SOHK.TV interviews with Christophe Honoré and the cast

Beloved (Les Bien-Aimés)

Christophe Honoré's new film is a return to the musical format of Les Chansons d'Amour, using Alex Beaupain as composer once again and adding Catherine Deneuve as the ultimate Jacques Demy tribute to his stock company of Ludivine Sagnier, Chiara Mastroianni and Louis Garrel, Deneuve and Mastrojanni play mother and daughter with Sagnier as the young Deneuve in a story that examines, with the lightest of touches, love and desire through the decades from the 60's to the present day, from Paris to Prague to London, Montreal and back to Paris again. A real treat for lovers of classic French cinema.

'Deneuve is as wonderful as she was in her early films with Demy.

Philip French, The Observer

'Captivating... a tremendously joyous experience.'



Available now on DVD and download and on Blu-ray from 22 October

Discs include 5 short films by Patricio Guzmán

Nostalgia for the Light

Guzmán goes to the driest desert on earth for this hugely praised documentary. Here, the sky is so translucent that it allows astronomers to see the boundaries of our universe. Yet Chile's Atacama desert climate also keeps human remains intact: pre-Columbian mummies; explorers and miners; and the remains of disappeared political prisoners from the years of the Pinochet regime. Women sift the desert soil for the bones of their loved ones, while astronomers examine the galaxies. Melding celestial and earthly quests, the film is a deeply moving odyssey into astronomy, archaeology and human rights.

★★★★ 'Stunning...one of the films of the year'

Peter Bradshaw The Guardian

**** Profound and moving'

Jonathan Romney The Independent on Sunday

Forum

FEEDBACK

READERS' LETTERS

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight & Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London WIT ILN Fax: 020 7436 2327 Email: S&S@bfi.orq.uk

Road to nowhere

There could be no more appropriate beginning to a series on cinema's finest finales than what I term "Anna Schmidt's immortal walk to nowhere", which ends *The Third Man* ("Endings...", *S&S*, September). It knocked the traditional happy ending into the proverbial cocked hat and may indeed be the greatest of them all, its power undiminished by countless viewings. Other worthy contenders include *Late Spring* (the shot of the apple peel is soulwrenching beyond words), *The Searchers*, *Diary of a Country Priest* and *The Passion of Joan of Arc.* **Robert Booth**, *Randwick*, *Australia*Ask and ye shall receive dept: see page 128 for

this month's 'Endings...' on, yes, The Searchers.

Bats in the belfry

In analysing the thematic sources for *The Dark Knight Rises* ('Anatomy of a Movie', *S&S*, September), you omit Victor Hugo and the dramatisations of his work. In contrast to the film's concept of 'people power', the author saw positive elements even in the 15th-century Truands of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, boasting a brutal subculture including criminal courts but taking up arms in an attempt to prevent an unjust execution. And he was definitely on the side of the 19th-century revolutionaries depicted in *Les Misérables* (even though he probably wouldn't have rated the musical very highly). **Bryn Hughes**, *Wrexham*, *North Wales*

What do points make?

I didn't care for the crowing over *Citizen Kane*'s slipping in the latest *S&S* poll, especially after you had campaigned for it. But this was particularly inane, from Ian Christie: "Orson Welles's debut film has been convincingly ousted by Alfred Hitchcock's 45th feature *Vertigo* – and by a whopping 34 votes, compared with the mere five that separated them a decade ago" (*S&S*, September). The 2002 poll was based on 145 lists, the 2012 on 846. That makes nonsense of the comparison between 34 votes and five. They were separated by about three percentage points last time, about four this time. **Christopher Melchert**, *Oriental Institute*, *Oxford*

Whither Pixar?

It's not so much the content of Thirza Wakefield's glowing review of Disney/ Pixar's Brave (S&S, September) that troubled me, although I do feel we must have been watching different films given the weak character, derivative plot and desperate lack of originality or humour that I experienced. No, it was the concluding sentence of the review: "The Disney/Pixar team is scaling

LETTER OF THE MONTH REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST



It's great that the recent success of 'Berberian Sound Studio' (above) has prompted a new critical interest in the 'giallo' genre, but it is quite frustrating to see reviewers misappropriating the term. In his review ('Film of the Month', S&S, September), Sam Davies writes: "As a film about a film genre [Berberian] hits all the notes of classic giallo" before noting how Santini's film-within-a-film 'The Equestrian Vortex' "is overflowing with... undead witches, horrific torture and an 'aroused goblin".

The giallo genre is not a "grand-guignol horror genre", as Davies states, and giallo films do not feature supernatural elements such as witches and goblins. Rather, giallo – named after the yellow covers of the Italian-language paperback editions of novels by the likes of

Edgar Wallace and Agatha Christie – is a type of procedural thriller with visceral horror elements that has very specific generic traits: a black-gloved killer; fetishised murder set pieces; an investigation; glamorous, affluent characters; a modern, metropolitan setting; psychological themes; and a preoccupation with style, beauty and surface (the fashionhouse setting is recurrent). Essentially, gialli are crime mysteries with Freudian overtones rather than supernatural horrors.

With its witches and goblins, 'The Equestrian Vortex' is surely more akin to the delirious, psychedelic Italian horror of Renato Polselli's 'Black Magic Rites' ('Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel trecento...', 1973) or Luigi Batzella's 'Nude for Satan' (1974) than it is to a giallo.

James Blackford, London

new heights of ambition, and if *Brave*...isn't the peak, who knows what fun we're in for."

Aside from the quality of animation that Pixar continues to develop, I feel that the studio's ambition has been on an inexorable slide ever since the unfortunate Disney takeover. From Toy Story 3 to Cars 2 to the forthcoming Monsters Inc. sequel and the recently announced Finding Nemo 2, Pixar continues to fall from great original filmmaking to another division of the profit-driven Disney business, churning out derivative sequels guaranteed to make a healthy profit but designed to achieve little else. The fact that Brave is a barely disguised Disney-princesscoming-of-age story, lacking Pixar's oncefamous wit, verve and confidence, only further highlights the distinct lack of ambition and originality currently pervading the studio.

I fear the longer it remains beholden to

Disney, the more the great original Pixar films will be diminished by further inferior sequels and (heaven forbid) straight-to-DVD releases. **lain Kelly,** *by email*

More poll reflections

Never mind that Bernard Herrmann's score for Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain* was rejected ('Soundings', *S&S*, October). He wrote the score for the top two films in the critics' poll (*S&S*, September), and for three of the top eight in the directors' poll. No director, and no actor, can match that. **Alan Pavelin**, *Chislehurst*, *Kent*

Congratulations on the new-look S&S and the latest poll (September), as nerdily fascinating as ever. To forestall the usual wailing and moaning over the poor showing of our national cinema, I should point out that the Top Ten

does contain a British production, albeit not by a British-born director. 2001: a Space Odyssey was made by MGM-British at its Borehamwood studio by an almost entirely British crew, utilising frozen funds from British box-office revenues. Stanley Kubrick may not have been born in Britain, but he spent longer making films here than Hitchcock did – almost twice as long, in fact. But if you insist on the national origin of the director as the crucial factor, then surely Vertigo takes gold for Team GB?

Dr Sheldon Hall, Senior Lecturer, Stage & Screen Studies, Sheffield Hallam University

The phantom influence

The influence of M.R. James in popular movies is now so removed from his original ghost stories that aficionados of the genre can lay vicarious claim to his hand on a variety of projects. Thus Dave Howell (Letters, S&S, October) is correct in his assertion that Nakata Hideo's 1997 *Ringu* is heavily inspired by the spectre of James and his eerie tales. But unlike Jacques Tourneur's 1957 Night of the Demon, which lays claim to James's 'Casting the Runes' as its credited source, Ringu is based on a 1991 novel by Koji Suzuki. In itself, the book may be loaded with Jamesian references and influences, but the film bears no formal acknowledgement of earlier supernatural themes. Hence Night of the Demon, loosely adapted as it is, remains the only bona fide representation of James on film. Tony Earnshaw, Halifax, West Yorkshire

Beyond irreverence

It was interesting to read Michael Atkinson's view, in his review of Len Wiseman's remake of Total Recall, that Paul Verhoeven's Hollywood blockbusters - Robocop, Total Recall and Starship *Troopers* – were essentially satiric (S&S, October). Whilst there is some truth in this, I always believed the main message of these films was that someone's identity and decisions were entirely the product of their political, social and economic circumstances. Indeed, this seems to me the general thesis Paul Verhoeven has been forwarding throughout his career. The early Dutch films, Business Is Business, Spetters and Soldier of Orange, feature respectively storylines about a character who cannot marry because of her social position, a relationship decided upon because of material advantage and a character who betrays his Resistance comrades because of Nazi-inspired threats to his Jewish wife.

In this way, Verhoeven seems to be offering a leftist analysis of how peoples' actions and identities are constrained and created by their environments. This continues through the Hollywood work and is again evident in Black Book, which features similar choices to those in Soldier of Orange. Even in Flesh + Blood and Hollow Man, we are presented with actions that are defined by established religious superstitions and prevailing corporate codes of behaviour. Basic Instinct and The Fourth Man also reveal characters' beliefs, identities and attitudes as being formed by a manipulative external force, though in this case it is the femme fatale who inspires actions rather than wider social forces.

Far too often, Verhoeven has been categorised

as a purveyor of a kind of camp trash delivered with "irreverence", to quote Atkinson. This understates the seriousness of his work, which seems founded on a coherent sociological view of how personal destiny often is a function of social-economic organisation.

Duncan Roberts, by email

From a hole in the ground

In his otherwise excellent article 'Film of a Thousand Faces' (S&S, October), David Thompson notes many references at work in Leos Carax's *Holy Motors*. But there are a couple more that he and a lot of viewers seem to have missed that may inform and improve further readings of both the film and its short predecessor, *Merde*.

The biggest is that the character of Mr Merde (and his backstory) has an apparent basis in Mikhail Bulgakov's 1967 novel The Master and *Margarita*. In the novel, the devil comes to earth with three followers in tow and one of them, Azazello, is a red-bearded man with a milky eye and a scruffy suit. This character in turn had its basis in the biblical character Azazel, named in the Book of Enoch as the fallen angel who taught people to make weapons and jewellery. The devil in the novel is named Voland, echoed in the lawyer's name in Merde, and his followers refer to him as "messire", a French honorific title often given to advocates. (This could also be Carax's reference to Taylor Hackford's *The Devil's Advocate*, in which the devil was also a lawyer.) In Merde, Voland says that he is one of only three people who can speak the same language as Mr Merde; if you follow the story in the novel, that would be Voland and his two other servants, Koroviev and Behemoth. Azazello also ascends from the underworld, as does Merde (literally, coming as he does from Tokyo's drainage system). In both works, the devaluation of money is addressed; in the novel, money is transformed into useless paper, whereas in *Merde* it becomes food. The novel was also the source material for the Rolling Stones' 'Sympathy for the Devil', which implicated Bulgakov's devil in wars. This is echoed in Merde sleeping in a cache of WWII munitions. More controversial interpretations see Voland as St Paul or even Jesus, with the three servants as his apostles.

There is also a startling similarity between Mr Merde and Saddam Hussein: both emerged from a hole in the ground wearing a worn-out green outfit, were condemned to death by hanging after a reign of destruction and hurled insults during their trial. When they were executed, both prayed just before the moment of death and were recorded on cameraphones.

Another slightly obvious reference point is Oshima Nagisa's *Death by Hanging*, in which a person is hanged but survives. A somewhat less subtle one is the repeated appearance of chrysanthemums, a symbol of Imperial Japan.

Hopefully, my drawing attention to these points will encourage people to review *Merde*, which is on my personal list of the greatest films of all time, and see Carax's new film in a different light.

Mark Hoare, by email

ON TWITTER



Si Williams @Si_Williams

Interesting to only see two women directors of top 100 @SightSoundmag films. Unless you don't know Carol Reed.

Mark Cousins @markcousinsfilm

Article by Jem Cohen in @SightSoundmag is one of best things I've read on Chris Marker. The mag's coverage of his death is beautiful, I think.

Gavin Toomey @Beautiful Train

Appreciated retrospective of Chris Marker in this month's @SightSoundmag.
As always, Marker will remain more vital to a future than a past.

Illuminations @illuminations

Digital archive of @SightSoundmag is a glorious and truly fantastic resource – thank you.

Michelangelo Matos @matoswk75

Much as I love the interactivity of @SightSoundmag's poll site, there's nothing like holding the issue in hand.

Mischa Hiller @mischahi

Only in @SightSoundmag can one get away with phrases like "extradiegetic incongruity" without a hint of pretension.

Robbie Collin @robbiereviews

Unmissable in the new @SightSoundmag: David Thompson dissects *Holy Motors*, the greatest film of the year.

Sandra Quinn @Sandra Quinn 2012

@SightSoundmag I love the digital archive but husband now wondering what justification for 40 years' worth of copies being stored.

Peter Opaskar @TubaPeter

Enjoyed *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). That was a scary few weeks when I hadn't seen all the movies in the new *Sight & Sound* Top Ten.

Matt Singer @mattsinger

I demand a recount on your poll, Sight & Sound magazine. Miami Connection is clearly the greatest film of all time.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

October p.72 About Elly, Certificate 12A, 118m 24s, 10,656 ft +0 frames; p.74 Barbara,
Certificate 12A, 105m 4s, 9,456 ft +0 frames; p.76 Dredd, Certificate 18, 95m 29s, 8,593 ft +8 frames; p.78 Killing Them Softly, Certificate 18, 97m 6s, 8,739 ft +0 frames; p.93 Liberal Arts,
Certificate 12A, 97m 20s, 8,760 ft +0 frames; p.106 Untouchable, Certificate 15, 112m 28s,
10,122 ft +0 frames; p.107 When the Lights Went
Out, Certificate 15, 86m 9s, 7,753 ft +8 frames

TELL ME ANOTHER ONE

Bart Layton's documentary *The Imposter*, telling the extraordinary story of serial child impersonator Frédéric Bourdain, has won near-unanimous five-star reviews. Layton says his duty as a filmmaker is to query the notion of truth rather than seek it out. But should we take him at his word?

By James Bell

"The truth is always strange; stranger than fiction," wrote Byron, and strange but true tales have certainly left many cinemagoers slack-jawed over the past couple of years. In 2010 we had Banksy's knowingly tricksy Exit Through the Gift Shop and Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman's Catfish, which was either fraudulent and exploitative or a revealing document of our social media-governed times, depending on your view. This year we first had Malik Bendjelloul's Searching for Sugar Man (which is undoubtedly true, and wonderfully so, and has became the second highest-grossing music documentary ever made) and then, hot on its heels, Bart Layton's The Imposter, which at the time of writing has passed £1million at the UK box office, nudging out Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth to become one of the top ten documentaries of all time in this country.

There's no denying that The Imposter boasts an almost preposterously compelling story, which is the crucial factor in its success – it's tailor-made for word-of-mouth 'water-cooler' debate. Questions arise on being told even the basic details: a blond 13-year-old Texan boy named Nicholas Barclay went missing one afternoon in 1994 after playing basketball close to his home, only to apparently turn up three years later in Spain, claiming to have been kidnapped by an international paedophile ring. Despite his different appearance and French accent, this person – who we learn is in fact a serial impersonator of teenage boys named Frédéric Bourdain, actually in his mid-twenties - convinces the US authorities he's genuine and is 'reunited' with the Barclay family, who welcome him with open arms. How could they fail to recognise that this person wasn't their missing relative? Surely this in itself suggests something sinister was afoot - after all, you'd spot someone trying to impersonate a member of your own family, wouldn't you?

It's a story that begs for deeper enquiry. And yet, as Jonathan Romney noted in *The Independent on Sunday*—in one of the few less than flattering reviews among almost unanimous raves (including a glowing review in these pages by Lisa Mullen)—Layton is largely content to present the story at the level of anecdote. Or perhaps we should say this is a film happy to do little more than put on screen the findings outlined in David Grann's long 2008 *New Yorker* piece on Bourdain, 'The Chameleon'. *The Imposter* follows Grann's piece closely, even down to introducing the supporting characters at the same points in the telling.

But film, compared to writing, offers different ways of digging for the truth. Watching *The Imposter*, while being amazed at the story itself, I felt a mounting sense of frustration at the way Layton kept ducking opportunities to push his interviewees for answers to the



An inconvenient untruth: the deceptions of Frédéric Bourdain (Adam O'Brian) prompt all kinds of doubts

questions his film was asking, or failed to follow through on such ambiguous areas as exactly what the police have established about the last known movements of Nicholas Barclay. Unlike, say, Errol Morris's The Thin Blue Line - a film to which many critics have been quick to compare *The Imposter*, largely for its thriller-like construction and interweaving of interviews and dramatic reconstruction – we never feel an inquisitive, probing presence asking the questions from behind the camera, looking for telling signs of guilt or evasion. True, we don't hear Layton; but neither do we hear Morris's voice in The Thin Blue Line until the magnificent moment when, in a final interview, the real cop-killer confesses to his crime. Of course, not every investigative documentary – not every police investigation - can hope for a resolution as startling as that of *The Thin Blue Line*, but Layton seems uninterested here in trying.

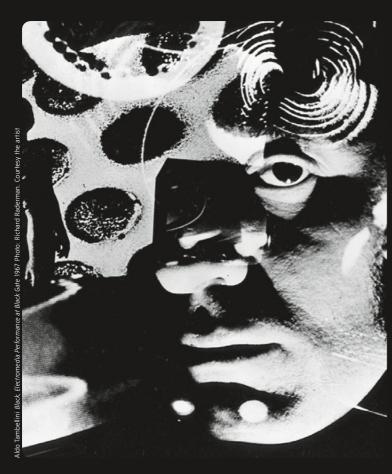
The ethics of documentary-making are complicated and subtle, and I'm not arguing for holier-than-thou piety: there's a necessary spectrum of approaches to the form, from the sustained interviews of Claude Lanzmann or Marcel Ophüls and the *vérité* approach of Frederick Wiseman to the use of reconstruction by Alex Gibney or – in search of the 'poetic truth' of his subject – Werner Herzog. Some of the most innovative documentaries have also provoked questions about the ethics of their approach – think of Hara Kazuo's *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On*, in which the

I felt a mounting sense of frustration at the way Layton kept ducking opportunities to push his subjects for answers

filmmaker doesn't intervene as his disturbed subject attacks another man. But does the filmmaker dealing with real people in a distressing or suspicious situation not finally have a responsibility to probe for the truth? Is the stance of neutrality not a cop-out to allow the director to sidestep the complexities and ethical questions prompted by his material?

In interview, Layton has said it was never his intention to make an investigative documentary (as many reviews have called it) into Nicholas Barclay's disappearance, saying that he was primarily influenced by fiction features - notably The Usual Suspects, with its 'everything's a lie' final-scene reveal. His real subject, he says, is the slipperiness of truth and the extent to which a person will believe a lie if it suits them. "There are two sides to every lie," states the film's poster tagline. The Imposter asks us to decide who we believe among this den of sly foxes, as though admitting the impossibility of the task. But who can we ever hope to trust if everyone is set up as suspect for the purposes of the film's aesthetic goal?

So there's something deeply bogus about the way *The Imposter* asks its audience to judge the members of the Barclay family while subtly implying their probable guilt. The film's closing scene highlights its manipulative modus operandi. We follow the private detective Charlie Parker into the garden where he believes Jason Barclay may have buried his younger half-brother after killing him, with his mother's help, on the day he disappeared in 1994. The film seems to be building to a revelation of the kind that concluded The Thin Blue Line, but no: as Layton surely knew all along, an overhead crane shot reveals nothing but an empty hole in the mud and a whole lot of unanswered questions. §



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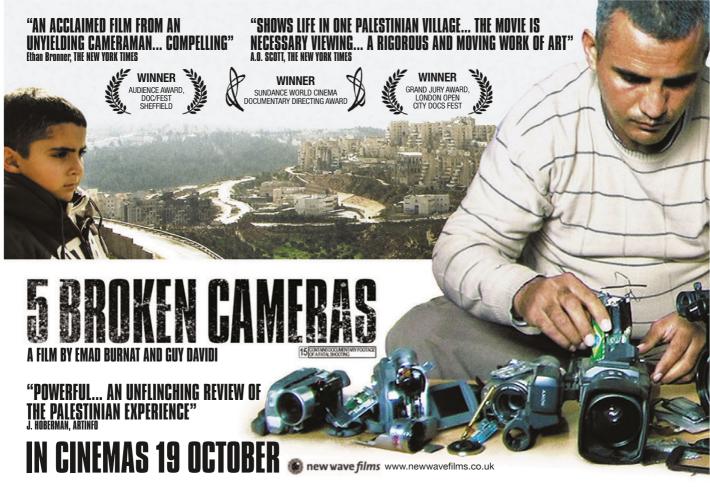
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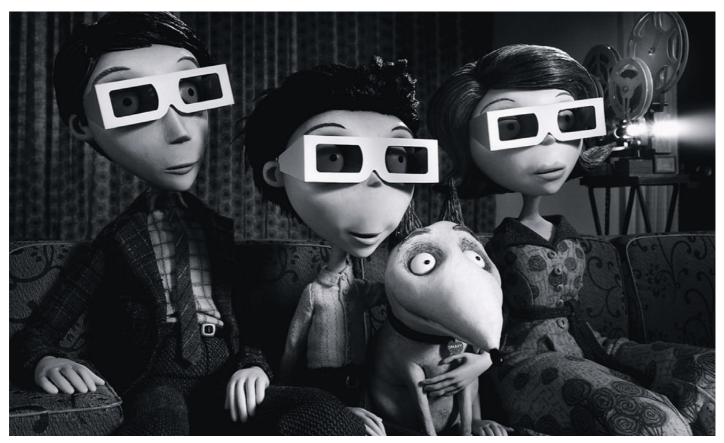
"A little The Straight Story and a lot Fellini"

The Sunday Times









86 Frankenweenie

Two years in the making, most of the sets and puppets were both created and shot in black-and-white. The result is stunning, capturing not only the nostalgic aura of old films but also conferring a brilliant play of light and shadow







90 Films



110 Home Cinema



122 Books



Poppet show: Quvenzhané Wallis as Hushpuppy and Dwight Henry as her father Wink, in Benh Zeitlin's 'Beasts of the Southern Wild'

Beasts of the Southern Wild

Director: Benh Zeitlin Certificate 12A 93m 23s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton



Beasts of the Southern Wild is a proudly handmade magicrealist parable celebrating the spirit of unbreakable communal self-reliance, even when that self-reliance is

foolhardy to the point of suicidal. It is set on the alluvial plain of the Mississippi, downriver from the scenes of some of America's most enduring artistic myths – references to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Night of the Hunter* have appeared in the largely appreciative and occasionally ecstatic reviews filed in the months since *Beasts*' 29-year-old director Benh Zeitlin collected his Caméra d'Or at Cannes. The credulity with which it has been received, however, recalls another of America's classic stories, this one concerned with gullibility and gimcrack cult faddism: Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man*. Zeitlin's elixir, a cure for the ailing US indie, tastes an awful lot like snake oil.

When I told a friend that I had discovered the worst movie of the year in *Beasts*, he replied:

"The preview looks like what I imagine an Arcade Fire video would look like." This pretty well nails the pre-title overture, which builds into a kaleidoscopic blowout of firecrackers and sloshing moonshine and every cliché of freewheeling lust-for-life, stoked up by Zeitlin and Dan Romer's score, trafficking in the same registers of ragtag triumphalism and cloving crescendo as the above-mentioned Canadian-American outfit. (Other points of reference include Spike Jonze's sulky Where the Wild Things Are, the vague and comfortably undemanding neo-hippie spirituality of US indie band Neutral Milk Hotel, and pretty much any other milquetoast, mollycoddling, security-blanket art for liberal-arts-grad softies.)

As protagonist Hushpuppy, eight-year-old Quvenzhané Wallis narrates in the cloud-gazing, free-associative style of a Terrence Malick voiceover. Malick is a master who rarely rewards imitation, however, and no disciple has taken the Prometheus of Austin's hard-won discoveries so far in the direction of parody as does Zeitlin ("Everything's heart is beatin' and squirtin' and talkin' to things in ways I can't understand"). Wallis plays opposite Dwight Henry as her father Wink. She's a first-time actress from Houma, Louisiana; he's a local baker; both are terrible. Henry punches his dialogue across in a monotonous bark – most

of the 'elliptical' editing is cutting around him – while the film's rooting, snuffling, nudged-in style, the sort of thing frequently referred to as 'intimate', smothers any attempt at group interplay. The fallback cutaway is a coochie-coo close-up of poster-moppet Wallis, pulling faces to convey indomitable life-force.

Zeitlin, a New York-born son of academics, relocated to New Orleans in 2006 with filmmaking collective Court 13, formed with Wesleyan University classmates. "Down with that hollow feeling!" begins the zesty 'About' section of Court 13's website, which goes on to detail the group's manifesto: "Court 13 values 'do it yourself' not as a matter of financial circumstance but as a spiritual requirement; each film poses huge,



Light my fire: Quvenzhané Wallis as Hushpuppy

painstaking challenges that defy the gods, nature, and just plain common sense." The abiding voice is one of gallingly insistent geewhiz positivity, accompanied by reiteration of the idea that boy oh boy are they ever some wild and crazy guys for making these just, y'know, totally out-there movies. Curiously, the tony words 'Wesleyan University' appear nowhere amid their self-mythologising.

Zeitlin and his cohorts are making their own utopia in Beasts of the Southern Wild – or the utopia they think they'd like to live in. 'The Bathtub', the isolated bayou community that's home to Hushpuppy and her father, is imagined as the quintessence of rusty, crusty autonomy, a secret kingdom cobbled together from the dumpster-rummaged detritus of civilisation (the raft on which Hushpuppy and Wink float towards salvation when the waters rise is made of a pickup cab equipped with an outboard motor), a place where the only urgent priority is a nightly drinking spree with minimal consequent hangover. The film is marked by a highly aestheticised love of colourful squalor and animal spirits that can only be bred by a tidy and responsible upbringing, while the sense of heroic self-identification between creators and creation is strong. "I put all the wisdom and courage I've got into her," Zeitlin says of Hushpuppy in the film's press notes. "She's the person I want to be."

'Wisdom' is essential to the project of Court 13 and Beasts of the Southern Wild, which, more than identifiable narrative satisfaction, offers its inscribed audience an opt-out lifestyle fantasy, a pleasing getaway into a craftsy, locavore commune with a minimal ecological footprint. What exactly is Beasts of the Southern Wild's wisdom? Lip service is given to lower-class stoicism – "It wasn't no time to sit around crying like a bunch of pussies," says Hushpuppy at one point, parroting her daddy's motto - but if one relishes this sort of home-truth common sense, the déclassé Tyler Perry is a more gifted aphorist, and more honest about flattering his public's prejudices. Hushpuppy's other principal mentor is Miss Bathsheeba (Gina Montana), the Bathtub's resident holistic healer and all-ages teacher. Although Miss Bathsheeba's lesson plan is apparently secular, she does recite the legend of prehistoric creatures called aurochs, mammoth boars that are seen throughout the film, as in a recurring dream, ravaging the land after being unleashed from imprisoning ice caps – a flexible metaphor for environmental disaster. "Y'all got to learn to take care 'a people smaller and sweeter than you," Miss Bathsheeba tells the children - dialect and all - the kind of legend you might find burned into a 'rustic' wood plaque. Hushpuppy's own revelations tend towards condolence-card homilies ("Everybody loses the thing that made them") or morsels that might be ripped from the captions of one of Bil Keane's 'Family Circus' cartoons ("When you're small, you gotta fix what you can").

Perhaps decontextualised quotations are an unfair representation of the work as a whole. But Beasts of the Southern Wild's 'lyrical' expression consists of not much more than a mist of romanticism obscuring a dreadful paucity, and to lose myself in the film's drum circle I would have to forget too much: for one



Wink and Hushpuppy ride the flood waters

There is an underlying 'don't think, just feel' vibe, as though to warn us against inhibiting our receptors to magic by looking too closely into Zeitlin's hoodoo

thing, Les Blank's documentaries of Cajun bonhomie, which effortlessly do everything that Zeitlin makes strenuous; for another, the delicate, dialectical counterpoint of federally mandated progress and fierce clan loyalty in Elia Kazan's Wild River (1960), understanding two sides of an issue while flattering and aggrandising neither; or the tugof-war between institutional social services and organic community in Wes Anderson's Moonrise Kingdom (2012), an American fable as inclusive as faux-populist Beasts is self-selecting. Finally, there's Bill and Turner Ross's nocturnal tour of New Orleans in their superficially similar kid's-eye-view Tchoupitoulas, a film

more in love with the world than with the idea of being in love with the world.

Our best and brightest have jumped at Zeitlin's invitation to enjoy cosy kitsch under cover of art, showing unusual protectiveness towards his po' li'l 'ol movie. The New York Times's Manohla Dargis, reporting from Sundance, where Beasts took the Grand Jury Prize, pre-emptively warned against a "minor critical backlash"; later, in the same paper of record, A.O. Scott noted that Zeitlin's film "winks at scepticism, laughs at sober analysis and stares down criticism". Scott takes care later to note that Beasts "is certainly rich enough to invite and repay a healthy measure of critical thought". We must wait for that; meanwhile, in much of the conversation about Beasts there is an underlying 'don't think, just feel' vibe, as though to warn us against inhibiting our receptors to magic by looking too closely into Zeitlin's hoodoo. But while there has been much talk of the arrival of Zeitlin, very little in Beasts supports it. Critics were hungry for a masterpiece, and a little child has misled them. 9

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Dan Janvey

Josh Penn Producer Michael Gottwald Screenplay Lucy Alibar Benh Zeitlin

Based on a stage play by Lucy Alibai **Photography** Ben Richardson Edited by Crockett Doob

Affonso Goncalves Production Designer Alex Digerlando Dan Romer Benh Zeitlin Costume Designe Stephani Lewis

Pictures presents

in association with Cinereach a Cinereach and Court 13 production in association with Journeyman Pictures **Executive Producers** Philipp Engelhorn Michael Raisler Paul Mezey

Cast Ouvenzhané Wallis Hushpuppy

Dwight Henry Levy Easterly Lowell Landes Pamela Harper

Gina Montana Miss Bathsheeba Amber Henry Jonshel Alexander Joy Strong Nicholas Clark Henry D. Coleman Peter T Kaliana Brower T-Lou Philip Lawrence Dr Maloney

In Colour [1.85:1]

Distributor Studiocanal Limited

8,404 ft +8 frames

The Mississippi Delta, present day. Six-year-old Hushpuppy lives with her father Wink in 'the Bathtub', a bayou community shut off from civilisation by a levee. The Bathtub is populated by an interracial mix of characters who have carved out a hard-drinking subsistence in the heart of the swamp. One day Wink abruptly disappears, leaving Hushpuppy alone, and returns clad in a hospital gown, indicating his failing health. A hurricane submerges the Bathtub, and Wink and Hushpuppy set out on a raft, looking to reunite with fellow villagers. Wink leads a rescue expedition to puncture the levee and drain the Bathtub. This act of domestic terrorism attracts the attention of government agents who forcibly relocate the Bathtub's residents to a relief centre, where ailing Wink is pressed into medical treatment. The Bathtubbers escape and return to their sodden homes. After quarrelling with her rapidly declining father, Hushpuppy runs away; she's picked up by a tugboat captain and briefly deposited at a benevolent dockside brothel, where she meets a mother substitute. She returns home just in time to say goodbye to her father, and marches along the floodbank with a procession of Bathtubbers.

Five Broken Cameras

France/Israel/The Netherlands/ United Kingdom/USA/Canada/ Republic of Korea/Finland/Switzerland 2011 Directors: Emad Burnat, Guy Davidi Certificate 15 94m 17s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp



"I film to hold on to my life," Emad Burnat tells us as he begins documenting his fellow Palestinian villagers' protests against the Israeli

separation barrier that will deprive them of half their cultivated land and the olive trees that grow there and sustain them. Five years later, after countless protests, demolitions, injuries, imprisonments and several deaths, he puts it slightly differently: "I film to heal. It helps me to confront life and survive."

The first thing we hear in *Five Broken* Cameras, before the first notes of Le Trio Joubran's plangent score licks in, is the hiss and crackle of a damaged soundtrack; the first images are fleeting and chaotic – earth, sky, indistinct figures scudding across the pixellated screen – backed by a confused medley of voices, Arabic and Hebrew, angry, agitated, alarmed. Confusion is the theme, as Emad's voice soon tells us: "I've been through so many experiences - they burn in my head like a hot flame. Pain and joy, fears and hope are all mixed together. I'm losing track. The old wounds don't have time to heal. New wounds will cover them up." We see Emad himself, handsome and serious: the five eponymous shattered cameras; and a

small boy, as solemn-faced as the man, gazing out through a doorway. This, we soon learn, is Gibreel, Emad's fourth and youngest son.

In Five Broken Cameras, the personal and the political are intertwined to the point of inseparability. Emad's initial intention in buying his first camera isn't to film the protests but to record the infancy of Gibreel, born to him and his wife Soraya just prior to the arrival of the Israeli surveyors. But even before this, he recalls, outside events seemed to shadow their young family. "Each boy is a phase of our lives... Mohamad, our eldest, was born in 1995, in the time of hope after the Oslo Peace Accords... We could go to the sea every summer. Yasin was born three years later, in a time of uncertainty. The very day the Intifada began in 2000, Taki-Ydin was born... His childhood was shaped by the long siege the West Bank was under."

And now Gibreel, child of the protests. Over the five years covered by the action we often watch events through his wondering eyes, see him try to make sense of the loud and incomprehensible happenings, of the banners and the uniforms, the shouting and the violence. "The wall", "cartridge", "army" are among the first words he speaks. Disquietingly, before the end of the film he's telling his father that he wants to kill Israeli soldiers.

This, from the mouth of a four-year-old boy, is the only time we hear a Palestinian talk of violence against the occupying forces. And despite all the provocation – the bullets, the beatings, the evictions, the gas grenades – the most we see from the Palestinian side is a few boys throwing stones. "Clinging to

non-violent ideals isn't easy when death is all around," muses Emad, after an II-year-old and a teenager are shot dead by Israeli troops in a neighbouring village. At one point we see one of the villagers, Daba, held helpless against a jeep, blindfolded and his hands tied behind his back, while a soldier shoots him in the legs at point-blank range.

Daba's brothers, Adeeb and Bassem, lead the protests. Adeeb – who, Emad notes, "is always looking for an opportunity to make a scene" rants theatrically into the faces of the soldiers: "Have you no heart? Have you no family? Every one of you knows that this is village land. You stole my land!" His brother Bassem, by contrast, is "the only one who's still optimistic... He still dreams about fixing the world." A cheerful giant of a man, he's much loved by the village kids, who "see a lot of hope in him" and nickname him 'El-Phil' (the Elephant); the film's most traumatic moment comes when he gets a gas grenade full in the chest and dies in agony. He's mourned by the whole village, not least Gibreel ("They shot my Phil. What did he do to them?"), and Emad senses the level of anger and hatred dangerously rising.

There's a raw immediacy

Emad admits to nursing the illusion that

about Emad's footage that's impossible to resist. The very amateurishness of the filming carries its own sense of urgency



Man with five movie cameras: Palestinian filmmaker Emad Burnat





From left: Adeeb and Emad

Gibreel surveys the wall

the camera will somehow protect him, even though he knows full well it won't. He's injured more than once and, like three of his brothers, arrested and jailed, though later released because the Israelis claim to have 'lost the evidence'. In one episode of Kafkaesque absurdity, soldiers come to his house and order him to stop filming there, because it's been declared a 'Closed Military Zone'. He's taken to a house in another village and put under house arrest. When he's threatened with arrest for the third time, Soraya, previously supportive, finally loses patience: "See what's happening to us because of your filming? If they take you, what'll we do, the kids and I? Stay home with your kids and find something else to do. Enough with the filming!"

Not everything is grim: the film has its moments of humour, of incongruity even. At one point we're introduced to a flock of hens who, although they have a perfectly good coop to nest in, insist on perching on the branches of a tree. The villagers take a certain pride in the birds' eccentricity. "They have their freedom," observes Adeeb pointedly.

Winner of the World Cinema Documentary Directing Award at Sundance in 2012, and of numerous other international awards, *Five Broken Cameras* has been described in some quarters as manipulative — which it almost inevitably is. As with any documentary, questions must always remain over what was left on the cutting-room floor. Emad's footage was edited by the Jewish-Israeli documentary director Guy Davidi, who also scripted Emad's voiceover commentary and receives a credit as co-director. Outside activists, both Jewish and non-Jewish, Israeli and non-Israeli, joined the villagers in their protests, and indeed the film was partly funded by the Israeli government.

Further ironic complications: after he was injured when his jeep crashed into the barrier, Emad was taken to an Israeli hospital; in a Palestinian hospital, he notes, he almost certainly wouldn't have survived. Yet because the Palestinian Authority doesn't recognise his injury to be 'resistance related', he gets no help with the hospital bills. "If you don't fit the

resistance image," he reflects ruefully, "you're on your own." As always with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the truth (to quote Oscar Wilde) "is rarely pure and never simple".

Even so, there's a raw immediacy about Emad's footage that's impossible to resist. The very amateurishness of the filming carries its own sense of urgency, of a determination to bear witness whatever the odds. The images – the fat white smoke of gas grenades arcing through the sky, ancient olive trees uprooted by mechanical diggers, the massed concrete tenement blocks of a new Israeli settlement

marching across the hills – communicate with stark indignation. And in the end, we get closure: a small but crucial victory. The wall is shifted back a hundred yards or so, restoring some if not all of the villagers' land. New olive trees are planted in the ravaged soil. Emad is able to take his two youngest sons, Gibreel and Taki-Ydin, to the seaside for the first time in their lives, and the film ends with them frolicking on the beach, the innocence of their childhood temporarily restored. Manipulative perhaps – but moving nonetheless. §

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Guy Davidi Emad Burnat Serge Gordey Christine Camde Camera **Emad Burnat Editing** Véronique Lagoarde-Ségot Guy Davidi Music Composed/ Performed by Le Trio Joubran Samir Joubran Wissam Jouhran Sound Design

Amélie Canini

©Alegria, Guy DVD Films, Burnat Production Developed through Greenhouse – a Euromed Audiovisual Project Christine Camdes Serge Gordey, Emad Burnat, Guy Davidi present a coproduction of Alegria Productions, Burnat Films Palestine Guy DVD Films With the participation of France Télévisions, Noga

Communications Channel 8, IKON With the support of The New Israeli Foundation for Cinema, Centre national du cinema et de l'image animée (CNC), The Jan Vrijman Fund, CBA Worldview, ITVS International. Fondation Alter-Ciné, Asian Cinema Fund A film by Emad Rurnat & Guy Davidi Developed through Greenhouse - a Mediterranean project for the development

of feature-length documentaries, an initiative of Euromed Audiovisual II Programme of the European Union Produced with the endorsement of Copro – Documentary Marketing Foundation (R.A.), Sheffield Doc/Fest Developed with the support of ITVS International with funding provided by Ford Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the John D.

and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation support of The Israeli Film Council Developed with the support of IDFA Academy, CBA WorldView, Fondation Alter-Ciné Asian Cinema Fund (ACF) In association with France Télévisions, Noga Communications

- Channel 8, IKON. YLE – Yleisradio/ Finnish Broadcasting Corporation RTS - Radio

Télévision Suisse

In Colour [1.78:1] and [1.33:1] Subtitles

Distributor New Wave Films

8,485 ft +8 frames

Palestine, between 2005 and 2010. The people of Bil'in, a small peasant village in the Occupied Territories, learn that the separation wall will come close, cutting off half their cultivated land – to be given to the nearby Jewish settlement of Modi'in Ilit. They resolve to march and protest non-violently every Friday after prayers. One of the villagers, Emad Burnat, who has bought a movie camera to film his infant son Gibreel, decides to record events. Emad's friends Adeeb and Bassem lead the protests. Adeeb is angry and outspoken; Bassem is a good-natured giant, loved by the village kids who call him EI-Phil – 'the Elephant'. Israeli soldiers fire gas grenades at the protesters, smash Emad's camera and arrest his brother Riyad.

In 2006, a fence, forerunner to the wall, is erected. Israeli and international activists join the protests. Emad gets another camera. His brother Eyad is arrested and Adeeb is shot in the legs. Settlers burn the villagers' olive trees and smash Emad's camera. Emad continues filming with a new camera. He is arrested and jailed, but is later released for lack of evidence. His wife Soraya begs him not to film any more. The camera is hit by a bullet, saving Emad's life. Other villages join in the protests. An 11-year-old and a 17-year-old are shot dead. An Israeli court rules that the barrier should be moved away, but the ruling is not implemented.

While driving a truck, Emad crashes into the wall, smashing his fourth camera; he is taken to an Israeli hospital. Bassem is hit in the chest by a gas grenade and dies on the spot. Adeeb screams at the soldiers and is arrested. Emad's fifth camera is broken.

In 2010 the wall is moved, restoring some of the villagers' land. They celebrate. With his sixth camera, Emad continues to film.



Raising canine: ten-year-old inventor Victor Frankenstein and his resurrected pet Sparky, in Tim Burton's 'Frankenweenie'

Frankenweenie

US 2012 Director: Tim Burton Certificate PG 86m 51s

Reviewed by Mar Diestro-Dópido



At a time when digital is increasingly a substitute for the 'real', Tim Burton's third animated feature *Frankenweenie* – after the Oscar-nominated *The*

Nightmare Before Christmas (1993, which he wrote and produced) and Corpse Bride (2005) — looks firmly to the past for inspiration, using gorgeous stop-motion animation filmed in luscious black-and-white to (re) tell the moving story of young Victor Frankenstein and his pet bull terrier Sparky.

A bright yet solitary ten-year-old, Victor delights his family with the amateur sci-fi films he makes with Sparky in the lead role, but Victor's parents are increasingly worried because he doesn't seem to have any friends other than his pet. When Victor is invited to take part in a science contest, he is only allowed to do so on condition he join the school baseball team. Unfortunately, as luck would have it, the first time Victor finally hits the ball off the pitch, Sparky is run over by a car when he tries to fetch it. But, inspired by the experiment that his utterly eccentric

science teacher Mr Rzykruski conducts with electricity on a dead frog, heartbroken Victor makes some small adjustments in his attic lab and manages to bring Sparky back to life. Inevitably, when his schoolmates and the local townsfolk discover the outcome of his experiment, all hell amusingly breaks loose.

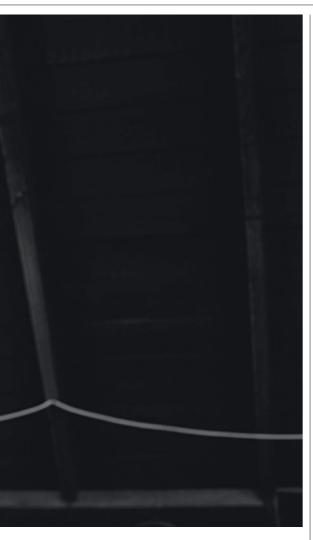
If there is a strong feeling of déjà vu to all this (or, perhaps more appropriately, a sense of resurrection), that'd be because Burton has done this before. His first job as a graduate from CalArts was as an animator for Disney, where he was given the go-ahead to make the critically acclaimed animation short Vincent (1982), about a boy who wants to be like Vincent Price – it's narrated by Price himself – and whose experiments on his dog Abercrombie turn his pet into a monster. The success of this project enabled Burton to make the live-action short Frankenweenie (1984), on which this latest feature is based. Problem was that, after negative test-screenings, the story of Victor's scientific shenanigans (which starred Shelley Duvall and a very young Sofia Coppola) was deemed too scary for children and shelved. Burton was sacked by Disney, and the first ever uncensored appearance of the short was as an extra on *The Nightmare Before Christmas* DVD.

Fast-forward almost 30 years and 2012's Frankenweenie is the first feature animation film that Burton has directed for Disney – though ironically it could be considered scarier and more violent than the original. Returning to the drawings he created for his 1984 short,

Burton employs the talents of some of his usual bunch of collaborators to breathe life into them: production designer Rick Heinrichs, whose impressively detailed work is essential in creating a literally three-dimensional setting for the fictional town of New Holland; and composer Danny Elfman, whose instantly recognisable style rounds off a fully evocative experience. After a run of disappointing films of late, the result is ravishing, giving a welcome sense of Burton returning to his roots, since both the 1984 and 2012 versions display all the key themes and obsessions that have become staples throughout his career: the romantic outsider; the trappings of horror encased in a broadly 1950s aesthetic; and, crucially, a challenging of the conformist norms of North American suburbs, filtered through and magnified by a young misfit's perceptions.

Perhaps more significantly, whereas in the original the sense of threat emanated solely from the adults (and the main POV was the dog's rather than Victor's), the most menacing characters this time round are Victor's bewitchingly freakish schoolmates. As such, the

The camera gets right under the film's disquieting surface, literally floating through the set, peeking around corners and into the shadows



young protagonist is already an outcast, a young prototype of Burton's antiheroes – from Edward Scissorhands to Jack Skellington and Sleepy Hollow's Ichabod Crane. Although generally mistrusted and misunderstood by the people around them, these castaways from life are actually driven by an active, passionate appetite to look/feel/go further, which opens up a whole new world of sensations. Because in the end, it's all a matter of subjective perception, and Victor, like all his adult reincarnations, is impelled by a necessarily childish, inquisitive, open mind towards discovery of the surreal (a point of

view even more clearly elucidated in Burton's illustrated book of rhymes, *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*, about a group of peculiar kids who are close kin to Victor).

Burton has often referred to the loneliness imparted by this awareness of otherness at an early age as a mark that never leaves you, so it's not surprising that melancholy is one of the key ingredients in Frankenweenie, as it is in the rest of Burton's work. Yet here it's not so directly emotional, instead filtered through (and distanced by) a series of cinematic and literary references that position the film as being aimed at adults as much as younger viewers, since the former can relish nods to Burton's earlier works, as well as to his most obvious influences and recognisable icons of the horror genre: Godzilla, Dracula, Frankenstein, the Mummy... When the electrically charged Sparky rubs noses with next-door poodle Persephone, the sparks between the two dogs produce two white strands of hair on either side of Persephone's beehive, Bride of Frankenstein-style.

Admittedly less eccentric and more classic in style than some of Burton's acclaimed earlier works (or indeed than the less fortunate projects of late, such as the cartoonish *Dark Shadows* or the garish *Alice in Wonderland*), *Frankenweenie* is still chock-full of the filmmaker's old dark magic. The rapport between Victor and his dog (mostly autobiographical) is tangible and beautifully rendered. Despite the marked presence of death and loss, the tone is gently moving, the humour deadpan and subtly tongue-in-cheek. Social comments are sharp but also redeeming on the whole. And what drives the narrative forward is children's contagious faith in a different reality.

Two years in the making, most of the sets and puppets in Frankenweenie (the latter all handmade and hand-painted) were both created and shot in black-and-white. The result is stunning, capturing not only the nostalgic aura of many an old film (or a film watched on an old TV set), but also conferring a brilliant play of light and shadow that enhances volume, in turn rendering the use of 3D purposeful. Real props (as opposed to a blue screen) allow the camera to get physically right under the film's disquieting surface, literally floating through the set, peeking around corners and into the shadows. This is particularly effective in the scenes that take place in the pet cemetery: when Sparky, tired and

frightened of the world of the living, returns to curl up by his tombstone, there is a palpable sense of loneliness, weariness and weight.

In the end, the core theme of resurrection applies not only to Victor's stitched-up pet (as well as to childhood candidness, and to the more personal cornerstones of Burton's career), but more significantly to a tradition of animated filmmaking that has been slowly disappearing under pressure from predatory new technologies. With Frankenweenie, Burton manages to revive Disney's most celebrated storytelling traditions and combine them not only with beautifully crafted animation but also with the added bonus of a somehow naturalised 3D. As such, form literally mirrors content – as Burton has noted, stop-motion basically consists of bringing to life an inert object – to conceive something fresh and new for the senses. After all, Burton's films are full of inventors whose main purpose is to envisage the impossible and to function as links between the real and the unreal, life and death. Thus Burton manages to demonstrate what Mr Rzykruski explains to young Victor – that "science is not good or bad, but can be used both ways". 9

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Tim Burton Allison Abbate Screenplay John August Based on a screenplay by Lenny Ripp Based on an original idea by Tim Burton Director of Photography Peter Sorg Film Editors Chris Lebenzon Mark Solomon Production **Designer** Rick Heinrichs Danny Elfman Sound Editor Oliver Tarney
Puppet Characters
Designed/ Created by

MacKinnon &

Saunders
Animation Director

Trey Thomas

©Disney
Enterprises, Inc.
Production
Companies
Disney presents a film by Tim Burton
Executive Producer
Don Hahn
Film Extracts
Dracula (1958)

Voice Cast
Catherine O'Hara
Mrs Frankenstein/
weird girl/gym
teacher
Martin Short
Mr Frankenstein/
Mr Burgermeister/
Nassor
Martin Landau
Mr Rzykruski
Charlie Tahan
Victor Frankenstein
Atticus Shaffer
Edgar 'E' Gore

Winona Ryder

Elsa Van Helsing Robert Capron Bob James Hiroyuki Liao Toshiaki Conchata Ferrell Bob's mom Tom Kenny New Holland towns folk

Some screenings presented in 3D

Dolby Digital/ Datasat In black and white Prints by DeLuxe [1.85:1]

Distributor Buena Vista International (UK)

7,816 ft +8 frames



Victor in his attic laboratory

The town of New Holland, US, Victor Frankenstein is a ten-year-old amateur filmmaker/inventor whose inseparable bull terrier Sparky is the lead in all his homemade sci-fi films. Victor's parents worry that he doesn't have many friends and so, in exchange for letting him take part in the town's science contest, they insist that he join the school baseball team. When Victor finally strikes the ball during his first game, Sparky plays fetch and is run over by a car. Disconsolate, Victor is inspired by science teacher Mr Rzykruski's experiment with electricity on dead tissue, and succeeds in bringing Sparky back to life. Schoolmate Edgar 'E' Gore blackmails Victor for his secret, and Victor has to repeat the experiment with 'E' Gore's goldfish, 'E' Gore's schoolmates prise the secret out of him in turn, then steal Victor's formula and apply it to their dead pets, which transform into monsters and attack humans. Sparky and Victor manage to kill all the pets apart from Mr Whiskers, a cat that has grown bat-like wings. Mr Whiskers picks up Sparky's crush, next-door poodle Persephone, and flies to the town's windmill. Sparky runs to the rescue, with Victor and the town's citizens trailing behind. When the windmill catches fire because of lightning, Sparky saves the day but perishes in the fire. The townspeople rev their car engines to revive Sparky, who finally comes back to life.

Ginger & Rosa

United Kingdom/Germany/ Canada/Denmark 2012

Director: Sally Potter, Certificate 12A 89m 58s

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen



The eponymous characters in Sally Potter's new feature are both named after reddish shades: one fiery and hot, one soft and sweet. And so the film shows them to be – two

17-year-old girls on the cusp of discovering themselves, with Ginger undergoing a political awakening and Rosa succumbing to a fantasy of romance. Such nominative determinism is typical of a film that makes no apologies for signposting its intentions; Potter has spoken of it as her most accessible work to date, and of wanting to remove as many obstacles to understanding as she can.

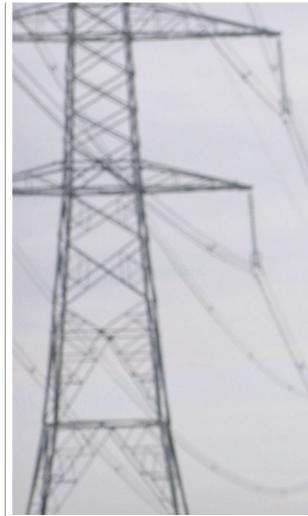
This is a radical step from a filmmaker who has previously revelled in the ludic possibilities of cinema. As a member of the experimental London Film-Makers' Co-op in the 1970s and a free-ranging multidisciplinary artist in the 1980s, she certainly never courted the mainstream. Her breakout film, 1992's Orlando, was a deft and visually lavish take on Virginia Woolf's modernist novel, and it rose brilliantly to the challenge of building a film around a fluidly gendered immortal being, making a star of Tilda Swinton in the process. Yes (2004), which tackled relations between East and West via a love story played out in rhyming couplets, divided critics; and Rage (2009) embraced the idea of 'naked cinema' to ponder DIY cameraphone filmmaking through a series of colourful monologues supposedly captured backstage at a fashion show. For her latest, though, she isn't interested in playing games with form, perhaps because this narrative is so strongly autobiographical. Potter, we surmise, is telling this one straight from the heart.

It's Ginger (Elle Fanning) who is Potter's proxy as we follow her coming of age in London in 1962. She and best friend Rosa (Alice Englert) were born on the same day in 1945 – the day the Hiroshima bomb gave birth to the nuclear age. Their mothers, Natalie (Christina Hendricks) and Anoushka (Jodhi May), are friends despite their different circumstances – Natalie is married to womanising university lecturer

Roland (Alessandro Nivola), who writes pacifist tracts in his spare time; Anoushka is abandoned by her husband early on, and has to struggle in an unspecified but implicitly dreary way. Meanwhile Ginger and Rosa are inseparable; all is well until Rosa catches Roland's eye and her loyalty begins to swing from Ginger to her father. The toxic emotional fallout rains down against the backdrop of the Cuban missile crisis as Ginger rejects both her family and her best friend and becomes involved in CND instead.

Potter – who also had a bohemian upbringing in post-war London and campaigned for nuclear disarmament - has pinned her film's milieu as firmly as possible to a time and place of which she has intimate personal experience, making it all the more curious that the finished product feels so temporally and geographically untethered. The casting – there are no British actors among the leads – looks on paper like a brilliant ploy to highlight the interaction between universality and specificity; unfortunately this doesn't quite come off, mainly because Fanning is unfairly overstretched in the lead. She tries hard and was obviously very serious and committed to the role, but her wavering accent, which is particularly ropey at moments of high emotion (a trait she shares with Hendricks), gives the film an unignorable air of tackiness. You feel sorry for her for all the wrong reasons in the end: she was just 13 during filming - and it's a tough gig playing a 17-year-old coping with the betrayal of a father who's having an affair with your best friend.

Englert is rather better, though her character as a feisty proto-flower-child fizzles out once the romance is established, leaving Nivola to steal the show as Roland the love rat. Nivola teases out the nuances of this rebellious coward's inner conflicts and manages to summon up a genuine whiff of England in his shabby selfrighteousness and shuffling glamour. In the background are disposable turns from Timothy Spall as a kindly gay uncle who arbitrates the film's morality, and from Annette Bening as an unexplained American feminist parachuted in to spout set speeches about the oppression of women and the need for direct action. The problem with the pared-down script is that none of the characters is given quite enough to say, including - in fact especially - Ginger and Rosa, whose supposedly all-encompassing friendship never has the room to express itself



Growing pains: Sally Potter's 'Ginger & Rosa'

through conversation, but is lazily sketched in via the shorthand of showing them trying on clothes, learning to smoke, giggling.

From a lesser filmmaker you would write all these problems off as mere carelessness, but from Potter you wonder if the clunkiness was intended as a mannerism, a distancing conceit which invites us to consider the unreliability of Ginger as a witness, her memory of a distant time and place rendering them dreamily childish. Robbie Ryan's stunningly beautiful cinematography adds to the air of unreality, though you can't help missing the vice-like grip on detail that his usual collaborator, Andrea Arnold, excels at. Instead, Ginger & Rosa is set in an empty London composed of desolate spaces (the wasteground around an abandoned gasometer which stands in for a bombsite, a playground marooned between apparently unpopulated streets); an unspecified coastal setting where the characters can be captured against scoured beaches and big skies; and a few bare interiors, including the boat to which Roland retreats when he's on the run from stifling domesticity, which is the ultimate example of a location cut off from its context. This is a vision of a pinched and stranded post-war Britain, one in which the 1950s – a decade stuffed with things and new ideas – appears not to have happened.

Not that Potter ever claims that her naive, poetry-scribbling main character has anything like the full picture. Potter's previous films have often asked questions about looking and



In arms' way: Elle Fanning as Potter-proxy Ginger



Potter isn't interested in playing games with form, perhaps because this narrative is so strongly autobiographical

seeing, but for Ginger it's through listening and overhearing that the truth is mediated. A filtered radio voice conveys news of the nuclear threat to Ginger as she brushes her teeth in the bathroom; her mother's grief over her failed marriage is expressed by the strains of accordion-playing drifting upstairs through the floorboards; Rosa's affair with Roland is

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Christopher Sheppard Producer Andrew Litvin Written by Sally Potter Photography Robbie Ryan Editor Anders Refn Production Design Carlos Conti Production Sound Mixer Jean-Paul Mugel Costume Designe Holly Waddington ©The British

Film Institute and Apb Films Ltd **Production Companies** BFI and BBC Films present an Adventure Pictures production in association with The Match Factory, Media House, Ingenious,

MisoFilm Danish Film Institute a film by Sally Potter Developed with the support of the UK Film Council's Film Fund Supported by the Danish Film Institute minor co-productions for feature films Made with the support of the National Lottery through The British Film Institute's Film Fund **Executive Producers** Reno Antoniades Aaron L. Gilbert Goetz Grossman Heidi Levitt Joe Oppenheimer Paula Alvarez Vaccaro

Cast Elle Fanning Ginger Alessandro Nivola Roland Timothy Spall
Mark
Oliver Platt
Mark Two
Jodhi May
Anoushka
Annette Bening
Bella
Alice Englert
Rosa
Luke Cloud
Rosa's father
Poppy Bloor
young Ginger
Magdalene

Christina Hendricks

Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1]

Mountford

young Rosa

Distributor Artificial Eye Film Company

8,097 ft +0 frames

London, 1962. Ginger and Rosa, both born at the end of World War II, at the time of the Hiroshima bombing, are firm friends despite their different circumstances. Rosa's father left her mother when she was small and she has been allowed to run wild; Ginger's father is left-leaning academic Roland, her mother Natalie a

former artist who now devotes herself to domesticity. As she grows up, Ginger realises that her parents' marriage is falling apart. Her womanising father eventually leaves home to live a bohemian bachelor existence. Ginger is terrified by the Cuban missile crisis; while Rosa is more interested in meeting boys, Ginger starts attending CND meetings. Rosa begins to idolise Roland and he is increasingly attracted to her. They begin an affair, which is consummated on Roland's boat, with Ginger listening in, horrified.

Confused and unhappy, Ginger moves out of her mother's house and goes to live with her father, but quickly discovers that Rosa is taking up all his attention, leaving her feeling bereft and betrayed. When Rosa reveals that she is pregnant, Ginger is devastated. She flees to the Aldermaston peace march, where she is arrested; in the aftermath of this crisis she tells her mother that Rosa is carrying Roland's baby. Natalie attempts suicide, finally shocking Roland into responsibility and remorse.

devastatingly confirmed by the sounds of groans and shushings percolating through the thin wooden walls of his boat's cabin.

But instead of being tightly focused, the film suffers from narrowing in too closely on Ginger's worldview – how much more interesting it would have been to have hinted at the political and cultural shifts that transformed the intellectualised activism of Roland's generation (he is presented vaguely as a jazz-loving has-been in a Kerouac jumper) into the direct action of the next wave, which eventually spawned the 1960s hippie movement. These subtleties pass Ginger by, of course, but the result is that even the Cuban missile crisis comes to seem, frustratingly, like a silly little thing cooked up by an angstridden teenager. Given that two of the main characters, Ginger and her mother Natalie, read so clearly as American thanks to the peculiar casting, it seems a shame the film doesn't tackle the shift in attitudes in Britain towards its increasingly dominant transatlantic ally, which after all originated the nuclear crisis that Ginger's so concerned about.

Of course none of these absences would matter if the emotional freight of the film were more effectively carried. By aiming for a light touch, Potter has made her framework so flimsy that it totters under the weight of the tragic upheavals it unfolds. It's odd to find such a bold filmmaker holding back so stiffly, and you come away wondering if the material was just too personal for her to close in on. §

Call Me Kuchu

USA/Ireland/United Kingdom 2012 Directors: Katherine Fairfax Wright, Malika Zouhali-Worrall

Reviewed by Carmen Gray

When it was proposed in 2009, Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill – incorporating the death penalty – provoked a social-mediafuelled international outcry. While this vocal condemnation was instrumental in the bill's removal from the nation's political agenda, the persecution of Uganda's queers ('kuchus', as they are known there) has far from eased. With their debut feature documentary Call Me Kuchu, co-directors Katherine Fairfax Wright and Malika Zouhali-Worrall maintain global visibility and pressure on the issue, and bear witness to the risky efforts of the country's LGBT activists. While the New York-based filmmakers are inevitably limited to an outsider's view, they admirably avoid western-centric condescension, revealing the barbaric bill's roots in colonialism and positioning hope for a solution within grassroots resistance.

David Kato, Uganda's first openly gay man and a leading activist, granted the filmmakers trusting access to his everyday life for more than a year, enabling them to make a powerfully personal and moving portrait. The small, wiry Kato seems tireless in his advocacy as he scribbles notes at his lawyer's office or listens to friends' dilemmas. His wry, unassuming wit thinly veils his constant dread of reprisal — a fear that proves all too real when he is brutally murdered at his home during the course of filming, making the documentary also a significant tribute to his life's work.

A teacher before becoming a Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) advocacy officer, Kato initially explored his sexuality while living in Johannesburg, before returning to Uganda to initiate a fight for LGBT rights in 1998. His courage in doing so is brought home by searing coming-out stories told by those close to him – trans-man Stosh, for instance, tells of a 'corrective' rape he endured when younger. The rigid barriers to acceptance are all-pervasive, with most LGBT Ugandans enduring a double life to minimise physical threat and pariah status. While Kato's mother still welcomes him, she relentlessly presses him to marry his best friend Naome – a lesbian and rights advocate



Activist: David Kato

who is only selectively out of the closet.

Opponents of LGBT rights are afforded ample screen time to show their colours. Gilles Muame, editor of Kampala's weekly tabloid Rolling Stone, smirks as he unabashedly describes hiring agents to infiltrate the LGBT community and obtain photographs of kuchus, which the paper then published with names and addresses under the headline "Hang Them". The inflammatory climate fuelled by a sensationalist media is only one prong of an institutionalised attack on kuchus, who are painted as a threat to the African family's cohesion and linked to decadent westernism, even al-Qaeda's terrorism. Particularly disturbing is footage of Christian fundamentalist gatherings where crusading American evangelists heap fresh colonial propaganda on top of existing criminalisation laws, remnants of British rule. Fervour approaches mass hysteria amid sermons accusing kuchus of 'recruiting' youth.

In the face of growing hostility, the kuchu community steadfastly acknowledges visibility as essential for change. Kato is murdered just weeks after winning a lawsuit against *Rolling Stone* to stop its public incitements. Tensions boil over in a gut-wrenchingly raw shouting match that breaks up his funeral after the Christian preacher denounces the gays present. "We are really going back into Amin's regime," Kato had chillingly observed. But while showing that no site is sacred to those intent on persecuting gays in Uganda, the film ends with hope, as SMUG counsellor Longjones steps up to head the struggle, praising Kato's inspiration. §

The Campaign

USA 2012 Director: Jay Roach Certificate 15, 85m 19s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Beginning with a (presumably intentionally) botched quote from the vainglorious, absurd and accidentally noble H. Ross Perot, election-eve farce *The Campaign* does its best work by broadly exaggerating the stuff of America's collective political memory into its full grotesquerie – a multiplex version of Hogarth's 'The Humours of an Election'.

Cam Brady, introduced reciting his mantra of "Jesus, America, freedom", is played by Will Ferrell. This is hardly Ferrell's first politician, for no one made more comic hay out of the George W. Bush presidency – but with his fervidly protected salon 'do and flagrant infidelities, Brady is a burlesque of narcissistic, charismatic populist Southern Democrats like Bill Clinton or North Carolina senator John Edwards. Charles and David Koch are obvious analogues to the film's Motch brothers – though the Motches are played by John Lithgow and Dan Aykroyd, who equally suggest the power-brokering Dukes in 1983's *Trading Places*.

Aside from a host of vaguely closety politicians, there's no clear real-life analogue to Zach Galifianakis's Marty Huggins. Galifianakis, a North Carolinian, has in other forums made a recurring character of a twin brother, 'Seth', who stayed at home in the Tar Heel State; before he's aggressively repackaged for the campaign trail, Marty is basically Seth, right down to the boxy blue jeans and the briskly repressed, stiff-armed walk. It's also worth noting that Galifianakis's uncle, Nick, was a Democratic congressman who lost a 1972 senatorial bid against Jesse Helms after the latter ran a more than slightly xenophobic campaign playing up his Greek surname – tactics the Brady campaign echoes in dealing with the 'vaguely Serbian' Huggins, called out for wearing a Saddam Hussein moustache.

The Campaign's screenplay is credited to Chris Henchy and North Carolina native Shawn Harwell, although, as is currently the fashion in American screen comedies, the thing feels quite loose and freely improvised. Harwell, Henchy and Ferrell previously collaborated on Danny McBride's superb HBO series Eastbound & Down, notable for its rare feeling for marginalised working-class America. In comparison, The Campaign feels rather more studio-bound – and the noticeable slackening in the film's second half will be no surprise to anyone who's laboured through the Austin Powers and Meet the Parents franchises, for which Campaign director Jay Roach is best known. Roach has also dabbled in the political film, having handled post-Bush/Gore election drama Recount for HBO and, most recently, Game Change, detailing the 2008 vice-presidential nomination of Alaska governor Sarah Palin.

Frivolous personality politics of the sort that enabled Palin's brief rise are *The Campaign*'s bread and butter. The emphasis on establishing regularguy manliness in electoral contests is caricatured in the candidates' sabotage of one another's personal lives, as Dylan McDermott's shadowy campaign manager drills Huggins in machismo by watching Burt Reynolds in *B.L. Stryker*. Ferrell is a full head taller than Galifianakis, and there is a great sight gag at the first Brady-

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Malika Zouhali-Worrall
Producers
Malika Zouhali-Worrall
Katherine Fairfax
Wright
Photographed by
Katherine Fairfax
Wright
Edited by
Katherine Fairfax
Wright
Music
Jon Mandabach
Sound Recording
Katherine Fairfax
Wright
Might
Music
Malika Zouhali-Worrall
Malika Zouhali-Worrall

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Cinereach,

Goodpitch, The Bertha Foundation/ Britdoc – Bertha BRITDOC Connect Fund

In Colour [1.78:1] Subtitles

Distributor Dogwoof proposed by MP David Bahati in 2009 to broaden homosexuality's criminalisation and incorporate the death penalty. The film focuses on a year in the lives of Uganda's first openly gay man David Kato, fellow activists Naome, Stosh and Longjones and sympathetic Bishop Senyonjo (expelled from the Anglican Church for his support). Gilles Muame, editor of Kampala tabloid 'Rolling Stone', is interviewed about his paper's campaign inciting violence against kuchus. We also see American missionaries making homophobic speeches at Evangelical Christian gatherings. Kato and other targeted kuchus Kasha Nabagesera and Julian Patience 'Pepe' Onziema win a landmark lawsuit against 'Rolling Stone' but, shortly afterwards, on 26 January 2011, Kato is murdered. His funeral breaks up amid heated confrontation when the preacher denounces the kuchus present. The activists regroup, determined to continue their struggle.

A documentary recording the struggles of the LGBT

(kuchu) community in Kampala, Uganda, in the face

of persecution and the Anti-Homosexuality Bill

Elena

Russia/France/USA/Japan 2011 Director: Andrei Zvyagintsev



Party animal: Will Ferrell

Huggins debate involving the Brady campaign planting height-inappropriate podiums.

Though one could safely wager that all the personnel here are registered Democrats, *The Campaign*, presided over by the disruptive spirit of Perot, is third-party comedy, its most pointed barbs directed at bipartisan issues like finance reform and Nafta. Much of the criticism of *The Campaign* has nevertheless dismissed it as toothless satire, though this may be because it's violated the cardinal rule of respectable political comedy: it's laugh-out-loud funny. §

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Will Ferrell
Adam McKay
Jay Roach
Zach Galifianakis
Screenplay
Chris Henchy
Shawn Harwell
Story
Adam McKay
Chris Henchy
Shawn Harwell
Director of
Photography
Jim Denault
Edited by
Craig Alpert
Jon Poll
Production
Designer
Michael Corenblith
Music
Theodore Shapiro

Sound Mixer Ken McLaughlin

Costumes Designed by ©Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. Production Companies A Warner Bros. Pictures presentation A Gary Sanchez/ Everyman Pictures production A Jay Roach film Executive Producers Amy Sayres Jon Poll Chris Henchy

Cast Will Ferrell Cam Brady Zach Galifianakis Marty Huggins Jason Sudeikis Mitch Dylan McDermott Tim Wattley Katherine LaNasa Rose Brady

Sarah Baker Mitzi Huggins John Lithgow Glenn Motch Dan Aykroyd Wade Motch Brian Cox Raymond Huggins Karen Maruyama

> Dolby Digital/ Datasat Digital/ SDDS Colour and prints by Technicolor [1.85:1]

Distributor Warner Bros Distributors (UK)

7,678 ft +8 frames

North Carolina's fourteenth congressional district. the present, Democratic congressman Cam Brady is preparing to run unopposed for his fifth consecutive term. Various scandals have, however, made him vulnerable to billionaire kingmakers the Motch brothers, who are plotting to make a profit selling the district to China. They back the effete Marty **Huggins as Republican nominee and their potential** puppet. Huggins gets the best of Brady in their first debate and afterwards a frustrated Brady accidentally punches a baby in full view of reporters. The two candidates attempt to besmirch each other's reputation: Brady identifies Huggins's facial hair with al-Qaeda; Huggins tricks Brady's son into calling him "dad" on camera. When Huggins rebels against the Motch brothers' plans, they redirect funds into Brady's campaign. Huggins goes on television to reveal his deal with the brothers but Brady still wins thanks to their vote-rigging. Brady's acceptance speech becomes a concession speech, however, as he steps aside for Huggins.

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Andrei Zvyagintsev's powerful, morally knotty third feature (after 2003's much lauded The *Return* and 2007's more divisive *The Banishment*) is a slow-burning parable that engineers assorted conflicts across generational, gender, wealth and class divisions and watches the resulting sparks not so much fly as sputter inconclusively. As with Asghar Farhadi's not dissimilar A Separation (2011), the film's central situation could easily be adapted to many other cultures, but Elena also seems intensely and peculiarly Russian, a filmic commentary on what Zvyagintsev seems to regard as a wholesale ethical collapse affecting all strata of society, where even the traditional family unit is no longer a reliably righteous bulwark against the forces of corruption.

The two-year marriage of middle-aged Elena and Vladimir is hardly one of equals. Hailing from very different milieus, they sleep in separate beds and spend evenings watching separate television programmes. Naturally, she does all the domestic chores, the latter often shown in such real-time detail as to recall *Jeanne Dielman* (1975) or the maid in *Umberto D*. (1952). He drives to the gym in his expensive car, cushioned by classical music, while she uses crowded, noisy public transport to visit her son Sergei. Her conversations with Vladimir are telegrammatic, generally about material issues, with potentially difficult emotional subjects either consciously evaded or swiftly dropped – when Elena wants to convey something important, she leaves a note by his bedside. They met in hospital, when she nursed him back to health following a bout of appendicitis, and this patient-nurse arrangement still seems to suit them. She has no relationship with his daughter Katerina (who refers to her formally as 'Elena Anatolyevna' throughout), and he in turn regards Sergei and what he sees as his irresponsibly growing family as leeches.

But as Zvyagintsev demonstrates, Vladimir

has a point. His step-grandson Sasha is a thuggish lout whose sole apparent hobbies revolve around violence of both the virtual (videogame) and sickeningly literal kind, the latter directed at people even further down the socioeconomic ladder than himself. For him, university is seen not as an opportunity for self-betterment but as a means of avoiding the military draft. Sergei himself spends hours on his rundown flat's balcony staring vacantly across the hideous industry-scarred landscape that it overlooks, happy to let his mother do (and pay for) his grocery shopping. Elena seems admirable at first, and even devout (when Vladimir is admitted to hospital, she lights a candle for him in church), but her later actions, driven by a warped interpretation of St Matthew's prediction that "the last shall be first", prove her to be the most morally compromised of all though it's a great tribute to Nadejda Markina's pitch-perfect, silently anguished performance that she remains so credibly complex and even sympathetic long after she's crossed that line.

The most level-headed character is Katerina, and the central scene in which she bonds with her formerly estranged father in hospital contains the kernel of much of what the film is about. Despite her advance reputation as a troublemaker, she merely turns out to be an independent thinker, challenging both Vladimir's and society's rules (she seems genuinely baffled as to why she can't smoke by her father's bedside, since he's paid for an expensive private room) and refusing to have children of her own because she's convinced she comes from a rotten seed and has no desire to pass on what she sees as her tainted, 'subhuman' genes. Her credo seems despairing but it's also ruthlessly pragmatic, born not so much from selfishness as the recognition that following the herd is pointless when the herd doesn't know why it's



Till death us do part: Nadejda Markina

For a Good Time, Call...

Director: Jamie Travis Certificate 18 85m 28s

doing what it's doing. ("Shit's gotta be tasty. A million flies can't be wrong.")

The nearly-two-minute opening shot (neatly bookended by the final one) shows the sun rising on Elena and Vladimir's flat in real time and most of what happens thereafter has a similarly deliberate, unhurried pace. Working mainly with the same team that made The Banishment (his cinematographer and sound designer date back to The Return), Zvyagintsev shows a similar confidence in framing and staging, although he significantly reins in the quasi-Tarkovskian symbolism this time round, which makes a brief, shocking glimpse of a magnificent white horse lying dead by the side of a railway track all the more potent. The major departure is the use of Philip Glass on the soundtrack – the composer offered to write a new score, but languid, gently chugging extracts from his Third Symphony turned out to be a perfect fit. 9

Credits and Synopsis

Producers Alexander Rodnyansky Sergei Melkumov Screenplay Oleg Negin Andrei Zvyagintsev Director of **Photography** Mikhail Krichman Editing Anna Mass Art Director Andrei Ponkratov Original Music Philip Glass Sound Andrei Dergachev

@Non-Stop Production Ltd Production Alexander Rodnianski and

Anna Bartuli

Sergei Melkoumov present a Non-Stop Production production with the support of Fonds du Cinéma A film by Andrei Zviaguintsev Supported by Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award Organized by Sundance Institute & NHK In co-operation with NHK Enterprises, Inc.

Cast Nadejda Markina Elena Andrei Smirnov Vladimir Elena Liadova Katerina

Alexei Rozine

Evgenia Konushkina Igor Ogourstsov Sasha

Dolby Digital In Coloui [2.35:1] Subtitle

Distributor New Wave Films

Russia, the present. Elena, a former nurse in her fifties, has been married to wealthy businessman Vladimir for two years. She regularly takes lengthy train trips to visit her son Sergei, his wife Tatiana and their children in their rundown housing estate; they can't afford university fees for their 17-year-old son Sasha (his only hope of avoiding military service) and Sergei repeatedly asks Elena to talk Vladimir into lending them money. A reluctant Vladimir promises a decision soon. He suffers a heart attack in his gym's swimming pool. Elena contacts his estranged daughter Katerina and asks her to visit him. Elena visits a church to pray for Vladimir's health. Vladimir and Katya argue but end up reconciled. Vladimir returns home, confined to bed, and tells Elena that he plans to leave his estate to Katerina, with an annuity for Elena. He also refuses to help Sasha. Elena adds Viagra to his prescription pills, knowing that this will trigger another heart attack. After Vladimir dies, Elena destroys the handwritten draft of his will and removes a packet of cash from his safe. Vladimir's lawyer confirms to Elena and Katya that because his will was not formally drawn up, his entire estate will be equally divided between wife and daughter. Elena gives the cash to a surprised and grateful Sergei. Slipping out of Sergei's flat during a power cut, Sasha joins his friends in an attack on a group of homeless people and is beaten up himself. Elena invites Sergei and his family to move into Vladimir's flat with her.

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

Released to inevitable Bridesmaids comparisons, For a Good Time, Call... passes the Bechdel test: two women have multiple conversations revolving around something other than relationships or boyfriends. Sort of. Nearly every chat stems from the phone-sex business run by rising editor Lauren Powell (Lauren Anne Miller) and her old antagonist, airheaded Katie Steele (Ari Graynor), shown early on 'strippercising' in her apartment.

Ten years earlier, in college, Lauren was introduced to a very intoxicated Katie by mutual best friend Jesse (Justin Long, playing Will & Grace-style gay). Katie peed in a cup while she was being driven home and the urine splashed on Lauren's face. The past still rankles when Lauren's boyfriend breaks up with her prior to moving to Italy for a summer law-firm job, kicking her out on short notice. Meanwhile Katie's hardwood-floored, airy, sunny apartment overlooking Gramercy Park (pricey Manhattan real estate) is no longer within her means: her grandmother has died and the rent control has elapsed.

Former nemeses are driven together by economic need. Lauren's publishing house folds and she can't find a new position; despite her four jobs, Katie still can't make ends meet. Their unlikely solution is an independent phone-sex line, combining Katie's voiceoperator experience and Lauren's business acumen. Thrown together into long working hours with no outside companionship, they discover that they enjoy riffing off each other.

Sincerely of the moment, For a Good Time, Call... is sex-positive, anti-slut-shaming (Lauren's friends support her new occupation, and it plays a major part in getting her a new editing job) and emphatically foregrounds the female friendship. During their first phone-line 'threesome', Lauren and Katie gaze into each other's eyes and recite the things they love about each other, from flawless complexion to inherent kindness. Their sex talk is formulaically responsive, repeating what the guy says to absurdly amplified effect. Dropping in on the middle of each other in vocal business, they turn their work into



Call me: Lauren Anne Miller, Ari Graynor

stand-up for their own mutual amusement, playing off unwitting literal 'straight men'.

Katie and Lauren's friendship is winningly played but Naylon and Miller's script is formulaic. The bromantic premise enters its third act when Lauren says "I love you" and Katie doesn't respond. They're both Jewish (a tossed-off punchline when an employee turns out to be a devout evangelical sabotaging their phone line) but Lauren's born-to-privilege status is the subject of constant sniping comment. Nothing substantive comes of their background similarities or differences.

Music-video/short-film director Jamie Travis's first feature is heavy on point-and-shoot close-ups, which avoid the inept widescreen claustrophobia that marred Bridesmaids. A montage of generic New York City street shots effectively hides the reality of a 16-day shoot in Los Angeles. Concealing straitened means, there are even something like guest stars. Long's flamboyant gay best friend is a tired type but Mimi Rogers as Lauren's pained mother and Nia Vardalos as the most soulless, evil female editor in New York City make big impressions in brief appearances.

The film is briskly innocuous and ideologically commendable, but there's still a distinct air of missed opportunity and compromised formula filmmaking for commercial safety's sake. 9

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Katie Anne Naylon Lauren Anne Miller Josh Kesselman Jen Weinbaum Jenny Hinkey Written by Katie Anne Naylon Lauren Anne Miller Director of Photography James Laxton Editor Evan Henke **Production Desig** Sue Tebbutt Music John Swihart Sound Mixer Aymen Braek Costume Designer Maya Lieberman

Production Companies Focus Features

presents an AdScott Pictures production in association vith Anne in the Middle, Principal Entertainment and Nasser Entertainment Group A film by Jamie Travis Executive Producers
Daniel M. Miller Ari Graynor Joe Nasser

Cast **Ari Graynor** Katie Steele Lauren Anne Miller Mark Webber

Justin Long Jesse James Wolk Nia Vardalos Rachel Rodman Seth Rogan Mimi Rogers Adele Powell Sugar Lyn Beard

Dolby Digital/ Datasat **F2.35:11**

Distributor Universal Pictures International

7.692 ft +0 frames

New York City, the present. Lauren Powell's boyfriend breaks up with her and moves to Italy, giving her no time to find a new apartment. Meanwhile, her college antagonist Katie Steele is unable to pay the increased rates on her late grandmother's apartment. Mutual friend Jesse proposes that Lauren move in with Katie to solve both problems. Lauren discovers that one of Katie's four jobs is as a phone-sex operator. When Lauren loses her job, the two women set up their own phone sex line. As business booms, they hire new employee Krissy, who turns out to be an evangelical Christian attempting to sabotage the enterprise.

Katie meets regular client Sean on a date and confesses to Lauren that she's a virgin. Sean and Jesse shoot a TV commercial to promote the girls' business. Lauren goes to an interview for an editorial position intending to turn it down but accepts. Feeling betrayed, Katie shows Lauren's parents the rough cut of their commercial. Lauren moves out. After having sex for the first time with Sean, Katie realises that she misses Lauren, who's just turned down her ex-boyfriend's offer to get back together. The two friends reunite.

Hit & Run

USA 2012 Directors: Dax Shepard, David Palmer Certificate 15 99m 45s

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

Any action caper that features a heroine with a doctorate in 'non-violent conflict resolution' has probably decided not to take itself too seriously, and Hit & Run both revels and labours in not doing so. Made on the cheap with showbiz pals, it's a homegrown affair for co-director, writer, star and automotive fanatic Dax Shepard, who not only casts real-life significant other Kristen Bell as his romantic sparring partner but also parades a few of his own vintage vehicles on screen. The goofball chase of Smokey and the Bandit (1977) is Shepard's declared paragon; with its knowing winks, Hit & Run ever so slightly deconstructs it, as well as invoking the tortuous road trips and looming deadlines of films such as Midnight Run (1988) and Planes, Trains and Automobiles (1987).

An indicator of the movie's throwaway larkishness is its main character's name(s). Shepard is Yul (after Brynner) Perrkins, a genial former getaway driver who's turned state's evidence against his inept crew of bank robbers so that he can join the witness protection programme. Lapping up the quiet life in a Californian backwater under the name of Charles Bronson (in homage not to the actor but the notorious British prisoner), Yul bursts his own bubble when he agrees to chauffeur new girlfriend Annie (Bell) in his souped-up Lincoln to an interview for a dream job in LA – simultaneously breaking parole and alerting his old accomplices, who are fresh out of jail. As in Smokey (and Hal Needham's other cross-country race caper, The Cannonball Run), the ensuing pursuit involves a slew of broad characters falling in an out of each other's cars, including a closeted, trigger-happy parole officer (Tom Arnold), Annie's conniving ex Gil (an amusingly unctuous Michael Rosenbaum) and a dreadlocked, bespectacled and track-suited Bradley Cooper as Yul's betrayed nemesis.

Annie's main role in this – and *Hit & Run*'s eventually tiresome running post-PC conceit – is to puncture the sweaty machismo and casual bigotry that would be par for the course in *Smokey*. Thus Yul grudgingly settles for blowing exhaust fumes in his love rival's face in lieu



Romantic getaway: Kristen Bell, Dax Shepard

of fisticuffs and gets severely reprimanded for using "fag" as a byword for "loser". However, despite her elevated position, Annie remains bafflingly dependent on men, running back to the pathetic Gil when Yul finally spills the beans about his true identity. Vying for attention in the trying-too-hard stakes are the cheap gross-out moments (a motel room full of elderly naked swingers is stumbled into twice) and extended off-colour gags on race and prison rape, although a scene where an animal-loving felon forces a bruiser to chow down on the sub-par food he buys for his pet Rottweiler is genuinely eyebrow-raising. Co-director David Palmer, a commercials veteran, applies surface sheen to the car chases but they still feel underpowered and a late use of counterintuitive scoring ('Pure Imagination' from Willy Wonka & the Chocolate *Factory*) doesn't quite come off. Most likely Hit & Run was a rush for those involved. For everyone else, it's something of a glib trifle. §

Hotel Transylvania

USA 2012 Director: Genndy Tartakovsky Certificate U 91m 21s

Reviewed by Patrick Fahy

Since almost the dawn of his cinema career, Dracula has been lovingly spoofed, whether at the hands of Abbott and Costello, Roman Polanski or Mel Brooks. Now Adam Sandler is out for the vampire count in *Hotel Transylvania*, a nice try from Sony Pictures Animation rather than a worthy follow-up to their splendid *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* (2009) that feels targeted to a fault, playing to children too young for the horror-comedy of *Frankenweenie* or *ParaNorman*.

Sandler's Dracula is an overprotective widowed father and control-freak manager of Hotel Transylvania (no humans allowed). When the 118th birthday party for his daughter Mavis is gatecrashed by airhead backpacker Jonathan, Dracula quickly attempts a coverup, disguising the human as a monster. But unlike Dracula, Jonathan can party and soon the guests, and Mavis, take to him.

The film is let down by the sitcom-level plotting, which dwells overly on Dracula's fear of Mavis leaving home while squandering the rich narrative pickings inherent in a hotel packed with famous monsters. The screenplay nonetheless boasts decent jokes, such as Dracula's debunking of vampire lore (wearily confirming vampires' vulnerability to wooden stakes with, "Who wouldn't that kill?").

Director Genndy Tartakovsky's background in commercials may explain the desperate restlessness marring the handsome animation, with certain scenes speeding by at the hurried pace of trailers. For all the frenzy, the filmmakers haven't really sunk their teeth into the outlandish gothic spectacle the title promised. §

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Michelle Murdocca **Screenplay** Peter Baynham Robert Smigel Story Todd Durham Dan Hageman Kevin Hageman Catherine Apple Production Marcelo Vignali Music Mark Mothersbaugh Supervising Sound Editor Jason George Senior Animation Supervisor James Crossley Imagery/Animation Sony Pictures works Inc Sony Pictures

Canada Inc

@Sony Pictures
Animation Inc
Production
Companies
Columbia Pictures
presents a
Sony Pictures
Animation film
Executive
Producers
Adam Sandler
Robert Smigel

Allen Covert

othersbaugh
sing
didtor
eorge Adam Sandle
unimation
sor Andy Sambe
Jonathan

Voice Cast Adam Sandler Dracula Andy Samberg Jonathan Selena Gomez Mavis Dracula Kevin James Frankenstein

Fran Drescher

Eunice
Steve Buscemi
Wayne, the werewolf
Molly Shannon
Wanda
David Spade
Griffin, the
invisible man
CeeLo Green
Murray, the mummy

Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS In Colour [1.85:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor Sony Pictures Releasing

8,221 ft + 8 frames

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Andrew Panay Nate Tuck Kim Waltrip Written by Dax Shepard Cinematographer Bradley Stonesifer Edited by Keith Croke Dax Shepard **Production Designe** Emily Bloom Julian Wass Sound Mixer Sean O'Malley Costume Designer Stunt Co-ordinato

©Outrun The Movie, LLC **Production** Exclusive Media presents a Panay Films and Primate production in association with Kim and Jim Productions **Executive Producers** Jim Casey Erica Murray

Companies

Tobin Armbrust
Guy East
Nigel Sinclair
Paul Bunch
Paul Bojic

Cast Kristen Bell Annie Bean Dax Shepard Yul Perrkins, 'Charles Bronson' Tom Arnold Randy Anderson Kristin Chenoweth Debby Kreeger
Michael Rosenbaun
Gil Rathbinn
Bradley Cooper
Alex Dmitri
Joy Bryant
Neve Tatum
David Koechner
Sanders
Ryan Hansen
Allen
Beau Bridges
Clint Perkins

Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor Momentum Pictures

8,977 ft +8 frames

California, the present. Yul Perrkins is a former getaway driver who, after testifying against a gang of bank robbers and joining the witness protection programme, idles in the small town of Milton under the name of Charles Bronson. When Yul's girlfriend Annie - who is unaware of his true identity - wins an interview for a dream job in Los Angeles, she asks him to drive her there; he agrees, even though it means breaking parole. They are pursued by Yul's parole officer Randy and Annie's jealous ex-boyfriend Gil. Having deduced his rival's real identity, Gil alerts Yul's former accomplice Alex, now out of jail. After eluding Alex's gang, Yul reveals his past to Annie. Furious, she deserts him to join Gil. Alex catches up, immobilising Gil and taking Annie hostage. Alex demands that Yul hand over his stash of money from the bank job, which is buried at Yul's father Clint's farm. Yul secretly tells Randy the location. Yul gives the cash to Alex but, with Clint's help, he and Annie manage to flee. During a chase, Randy shoots Alex; Alex and his gang are apprehended by police. Yul delivers Annie to the interview on time, and she gets the job.

Romania, the present. Dracula runs Hotel
Transylvania, a haven for monsters to get away from
humans. Guests arrive for his daughter Mavis's 118th
birthday party, and human backpacker Jonathan
also stumbles in, thinking it's a fancy-dress party.
Jonathan and Mavis fall for each other. Telling
Jonathan how his wife was killed by a human mob,
Dracula persuades him that humans and monsters
can't mix. Jonathan leaves. Seeing Mavis forlorn,
Dracula flies as a bat to Jonathan's plane and admits
that he was wrong. Jonathan and Mavis are reunited.

House at the End of the Street

USA/Canada 2012 Director: Mark Tonderai Certificate 15, 100m, 39s

Reviewed by Kim Newman



House at the End of the Street has a story credit for Jonathan Mostow (Terminator Rise of the Machines, Breakdown) who was, some years

ago, going to direct it himself. The actual script is by David Loucka, who follows his work on Jim Sheridan's Dream House (2011) with another serving of old, old material. Though less annoying than that film, this American effort from British director Mark Tonderai (of the modestly impressive *Hush*) suffers from the same fatal flaw: when the big twist comes along to set up the third-act runaround, all the groundwork done earlier goes to waste. The film's surprise switch is well set up, but feels like a betrayal: audiences have squandered emotional investment in a teenage Jane Eyre situation which is just a narrative feint. In a development that's hard to warm to, it turns out that the bigoted locals of the town where teenager Elissa and her overprotective mother have just bought a house were right all along – the soft-spoken kid everyone picks on is just no damn good after all. It doesn't help that his particular psychopathology has become wildly overfamiliar in psycho-thrillers since Norman Bates turned out to be his mother back in 1960.

The pity of it is that, before the plot takes its leftfield kink, the film was doing well by its small-scale mix of old-dark-house horrors and indie-style teenage drama. As Elissa, Jennifer Lawrence brings a great deal of credibility to her good-girl role, and plays well with Elisabeth Shue as her mother - an ex-groupie ER doctor who was once married to a rock musician and is still plainly battered by the wild ride of her life so far – and Max Thieriot as mysterious neighbour Ryan, who may or may not be keeping his murderous sister in his basement. Though her mother gives her a hard time for her tendency to distract herself from her own problems by making a 'project' of the most damaged kid she can find, Elissa has interesting, complicated reasons



Girl afraid: Jennifer Lawrence

for what she does and is one of the smarter horror-movie heroines of recent years. The business with the mad sister in the basement, ambiguously played so that the girl seems to be both a threat and a victim, would probably be enough to sustain a film (or at least a 1973 TV movie) but gets set aside when the 'monster' seems to make a too-early exit from the plot.

The finale is a string of cliché moments: the kindly policeman who intervenes only to notice a few wrong details and get killed (his main plot purpose is to leave a gun on the floor); the torch with dodgy batteries (also brought to the house by the handy if doomed cop) which lights up the cellar in subjective camera flashes until inevitably the killer looms; the escape from the boot of a car where the heroine has been locked with the corpse of a predecessor; the seemingly dead murderer with needed keys in his pocket who makes a grab as the heroine gets within reach. Admittedly, these things are clichés because they mostly work even as audiences recognise the contrivance, but trotting them out one after another fatally tips the whole film over into absurdity. With 15-certificate mildness, the maniac isn't even killed by multiple stabbings and shootings and is last seen working on a jigsaw in an asylum. 9

Inbred

Germany/United Kingdom 2011 Director: Alex Chandon Certificate 18 98m 20s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

Battered and bound, Dwight is wheeled out before a barnyard theatre of Yorkshire villagers who don protective 3D goggles and cheer with delight as sewage is pumped into the teen delinquent's mouth – until his body explodes in a shower of shit. In all its lowbrow grotesquerie, this scene encapsulates the essence of Alex Chandon's Inbred, in which a bunch of urban delinquents are picked off by psychotic yokels: viewers unsure whether to identify with the young man tied to the chair or with his baying, boorish audience can rest assured that, either way, they will end up covered in crap. If the penile mask sported by Dwight's tormentor evokes Alex's phallic headwear in *A Clockwork Orange*(1971), this reflects a film that is derivative to a fault, overtly cannibalising its community of murderous rustics from The Texas Chain Saw Massacre (1974), The Hills Have Eyes (1977), Two Thousand Maniacs! (1964) and Deliverance (1972).

Inbred belongs to the pre-school of British horror-comedy that has produced such mirthless monstrosities as Evil Aliens (2004) and Lesbian Vampire Killers (2008). Absurdly exaggerating the South's anxieties about the North and the city's fear of the country, Chandon's film resorts to the broadest of stereotypes: tooth-challenged, maggot-chewing hicks concealing ferrets down their trousers and singing "ee-by-ee-by-gum". Any remaining nuance is obliterated by bucketloads of bodily sauce, both red and brown. 9

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Margaret Milner Schmueck Michael Kraetzer Yazid Benfeghoul Screenplay Alex Chandon Paul Shrimpton Director of Photography Ollie Downey Editor Olie Griffin Production

Designer Melanie Light **Composer** David Andrews Sound Recordist Brian Gray Costume Designe Madeleine Millar

©New Flesh Films Production A New Flesh Films and Split Second Films production A film by Alex Chandon Executive Michael Kraetzer Yazid Benfeghoul Alex Chandon

Cast Jo Hartley James Doherty Seamus O'Neill Jim James Burrov Terry Haywood

Joanne Mitchell

Zeb Nadine Rose Mulkerrin Sam

Chris Waller Neil I einer **Derek Melling** Greg Damien Lloyd **Davies** Mark Rathb Ted Metcalf

In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor Anchor Bay Entertainment

8,850 ft +0 frames

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Peter Block Hal Lieberman Screenplay David Loucka **Story** Jonathan Mostow Director of Photography Miroslaw Baszak Edited by Steven Mirkovich Karen Porte **Production Designe** Lisa Soper Original Music Theo Green Sound Mixer Philip Stall Costume Designer Jennifer Stroud

©HATES, LLC Production Compani Relativity Media presents a FilmNation Entertainment/A Bigger Boat production

Produced with the participation of The Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit, OMDC **Executive Producers** Allison Silver Sonny Mallhi Steve Samuels Anthoni Visconsi II Dominic Visconsi Jr Ryan Kavanaugh Tucker Tooley

Cast Jennifer Lawrence **Max Thieriot** Gil Bellows Elisabeth Shue Eva Link Carrie Anne **Nolan Gerard Funk** Tyler Allie MacDonald Jordan Hayes

Penn State Carrie Anne Krista Bridges Mary Jacobson **James Thomas** Hailee Sisera Caitlin Craig Eldridge Dan Gifford

Dolby/Datasat/ SDDS Γ2.35:11

Distributor Momentum Pictures

9.058 ft +8 frames

mother Sarah are able to rent a large house in the country because its proximity to a murder site has lowered property values. Reputedly, Carrie Anne Jacobson killed her parents and disappeared; her brother Ryan now lives in their house. Though warned against associating with Ryan, Elissa befriends the young man, who is reticent about letting her get too close because he has his sister imprisoned in a basement cell. Carrie Anne escapes and Ryan accidentally kills her while keeping her quiet to prevent Elissa finding out about her. Rvan comes into town to see Elissa's band perform and is attacked by local youths who have trashed his car. He fights back, putting one of them in hospital. Elissa has to go to the Jacobson house to put out a fire started by troublemakers, and discovers a newly kidnapped girl in the basement. The real Carrie Anne died in a childhood accident for which Ryan blames himself, and their drug-addicted parents forced Ryan to take on her persona to conceal their negligence; in his sister's personality, he murdered them. Since their deaths, he has abducted a succession of girls to play Carrie Anne - he kills the latest, intent on making Elissa take her place. Sarah intervenes and is wounded trying to protect her daughter. Elissa fights back and wounds Rvan, who is institutionalised.

US, the present. Teenager Elissa and her divorced

The village of Mortlake, Yorkshire, the present. Up from Milton Keynes for a character-building weekend, teen delinquents Tim, Sam, Dwight and Zeb and care-workers Jeff and Kate fall foul of inbred, cannibalistic locals (led by publican Jim). After decapitating the injured Jeff, a now blacked-up Jim has Zeb and Dwight grotesquely murdered before a baying audience. Tim, Sam and Kate escape to their cottage, but are besieged by a posse. Maimed in a booby-trapped field, Kate is killed for sport. Tim sets a firetrap in the cottage's cellar but it fails and he too is killed. Fleeing, Sam steps on a mine, triggering it when a ferret runs up her trousers. Jim and his fellow villagers head back for a pint.

Keep the Lights On

USA 2012 Director: Ira Sachs

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston



Ira Sachs's intimate New York drama explores the consequences of a toxic relationship in which sexual passion proves an unhelpful distraction and emotional

commitment an ongoing excuse to avoid unpalatable realities. Unfolding over eight years, it's an episodic traversal through the tangle of feelings and desire experienced by Erik, a Danish expat bobbing along as a modestly successful indie documentarist, and Paul, who's balancing a high-powered job as a literary agent with a crack habit that only Erik knows about. The two men's sexual preferences establish a context for their story, since they first meet courtesy of a gay chatline, but even though Paul leaves his girlfriend for Erik, their being gay is far from the central issue. Indeed, Sachs largely sidesteps questions of homophobic prejudice or individual self-worth in favour of an exploration of the tyranny of coupledom, played out through the turbulent experiences of a duo trying too hard to believe they're made for each other.

Bergman's Scenes from a Marriage (1973) or even François Ozon's 5x2 (2004) would seem to be obvious filmic reference points here, but as Sachs himself has acknowledged, the film springs from his personal experiences. If Erik is a none-too-flattering self-portrait of an independent filmmaker overly comfortable within the cosseting frame of modest achievement and acclaim, it's also become public knowledge that Paul is based on Sachs's former partner Bill Clegg, an agent who penned the revelatory memoir Portrait of an Addict as a Young Man. Filtering autobiography into celluloid form seems to have brought a degree of distance, however, for rather than constructing a film that takes sides or gets dizzy with its own emotional excesses, Sachs keeps the audience at a slight remove. Skipping forward three years here and four years there to militate against any kind of melodramatic rollercoaster, he also expertly times a number of Ozu-style pillow shots (one cut to a bright yet forlorn streetlight at a key story beat is pure class), thus encouraging us to ponder the meaning of Erik and Paul's travails rather than get too caught up in them.

That sort of reserve won't appeal to every viewer, nor will everyone have the patience with the handsome yet self-destructive Paul that Erik sustains for so long. But the latter is on a journey towards the realisation that in both personal and career terms he's settling for what he knows - even if it's clearly dysfunctional rather than mustering the courage to face change and the unknown territory beyond. Given the film's relaxed attitude to skin on skin, the ease with which it moves from bedroom to bar, it'll doubtless be compared to last year's British indie breakout hit Weekend, but where that film's director Andrew Haigh used a compressed timeframe to force his insecure lovers into making a decision, the territory here could hardly be more different, tracing an increasingly pained drift away from the ecstasies of sexual communion into the behavioural conundrums of moving in together and staying together.



Love is the drug: Thure Lindhardt, Zachary Booth

As he showed in his 2005 Sundance awardwinner Forty Shades of Blue, Sachs is particularly adept at using the spatial arrangements and colour temperature of his decors to set the expressive agenda. Here, for instance, the anodyne beige striped wallpaper in the hallway outside the couple's flat becomes a symbol of desolation when set against the slumped figure of Paul, who hasn't quite made it home after yet another binge. Erik, in turn, is often framed with open doorways behind or in front of him, denoting a character in an eternal state of transition, while the blazing sunlight pouring in through a car window or the harsh glare of a bedside lamp casts no warming glow in these circumstances, instead ruthlessly revealing the self-delusions Erik and Paul have tried to contrive for themselves.

Working in 16mm, Greek cinematographer

Thimios Bakatakis makes a splendid contribution, relishing the grain that gives the film a delicate anomie when required something highlighted by the truly imaginative use of the late Arthur Russell's spacey electroballad melancholia on the soundtrack. A shame, then, that Danish actor Thure Lindhardt's central performance isn't quite up to the nuanced variety the material demands. Convincing enough as the befuddled would-be carer for his careening other half, Lindhardt never fully registers the character's lurking anxieties or the emotional toll the years take on him, with the result that the supposedly game-changing final scene falls just that bit short. Still, whatever his film ultimately misses in visceral impact, Sachs's stylistic finesse and guiding intelligence create a thoughtprovoking equilibrium between the heat of the moment and recollection in tranquillity. 9

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Marie Therese Guirgis Lucas Joaquin Ira Sachs Written by

Written by Ira Sachs Mauricio Zacharias Director of Photography Thimios Bakatakis

Editor
Affonso Goncalves
Production Designer
Amy Williams
Music

Arthur Russell
Sound Deigner
Damian Volpe
Costume Designer
Elisabeth Vastola

©Keep The Lights On, Inc. **Production Companies** Parts and Labor, Post Factory NY Films, Tiny Dancer Films, Alarum Pictures and Film 50 present

Executive Producers Lars Knudsen Jay Van Hoy

Jay Van Hoy Jawal Nga Ali Betil Adam Hohenberg

Cast
Thure Lindhardt
Erik
Zachary Booth
Paul
Julianne Nicholson
Claire
Souléymane
Sy Savané
Alassane
Paprika Steen
Karen
Marilyn Neimark
herself
Sebastian La Cause
Russ
Sarah Hess
Katie
Miguel Del Toro

In Coloui

[1.85:1]

Distributor
Peccadillo
Pictures Ltd

New York, 1998. Erik, an independent filmmaker working on a documentary about underground gay photographer Avery Willard, has a sexually charged encounter with Paul when they hook up via a chatline. The liaison blossoms into an affair, which Paul keeps secret from his girlfriend until the two men move in together. Erik's wealthy sister Karen says he needs to find a steady job; Paul works for a leading publisher but has a crack habit. By 2000, Paul's petty jealousies are putting a strain on the relationship while his increasing drug use sees him giving up work for rehab. Erik stands by him, despite warnings from his friends, but also continues cruising, on one occasion picking up young artist Igor. The following year, a seemingly recovered Paul attends a family Christmas gathering with Erik, but when Erik's documentary wins an award at the Berlin Film Festival, Paul can't be contacted. On his return, Erik finds him drugged up in a swish downtown hotel. He refuses to come home and Erik holds his hand while Paul is fucked by a rent boy. Paul moves out. Some time later, Paul and Erik have dinner together and wind up in bed. There's a tentative reunion, though Erik has also been reconnected with Igor. Paul eventually forces Erik to choose between moving back in together or making a clean break. Erik chooses the latter.

Keith Lemon The Film

United Kingdom 2012 Director: Paul Angunawela Certificate 15, 85m 14s.

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

British comedian Leigh Francis never makes a television appearance out of character, bringing the same commitment to his multiple personalities as satirist-writeractor Sacha Baron Cohen – with arguably less perspicacity. Keith Lemon The Film follows five series of Francis's mask-theatre TV sketch show Bo' Selecta! and his Bafta-winning chat show Celebrity Juice, which was hosted by unruly grotesque Keith Lemon.

Francis's Chaucerian sense of scatological fun repeats here with Lemon's backstory. A narcissistic innocent with a 'gift' for ornery vernacular, Lemon aspires to make his fortune in London but lands in hot water when he accidentally orders a million samples of his business product, the 'Securipole'. Becoming a billionaire thanks to a separate invention, Lemon would rather seduce glamour model Kelly Brook and pay for penis-enlargement surgery than sort out his debts and rescue girlfriend Rosie from kidnap by his creditors.

It's an unskilled, unambitious film by first-timer Paul Angunawela, with no appeal to those not already converted to the TV prototype. Narrative improbability and chauvinistic punditry are all the intended humour here, and rarely draw laughs. Few of the supporting actors are funny when they're needed to be, the film's amateurish cameos missing only the philanthropy of a Comic Relief special of EastEnders. Credit must be given where due and capable acting by Francis puts Lemon the right side of insufferable. §

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Mark Huffam Aidan Elliott Screenplay Paul Angunawela Director of Photography Julian Court Editor Peter Boyle Production **Designer** Tom McCullagh Music Mark Todd Derek Hehir Hazel Webb-Crozier ©Lions Gate

Pictures UK Limited Production Compani Lionsgate Pictures presents in association with Molinare and Northern Ireland

Screen a Generator Entertainment production Executive Simon Bosanquet Andrew Boswell Zvgi Kamasa Nick Manzi Emma Berkofsky

Cast Leigh Francis Keith Lemon/ Evil Steve Verne Troyer Archimedes Kevin Bishop Douglas Orange Laura Aikman Rosie Nina Wadia Conleth Hill

delivery mar Harish Patel Kushvinder

Emma Bunton

Molania Chisholm Gary Barlow Jedward Vernon Kay Rizzle Kicks Chris Moyles Jason Donovan Peter Andre Gino D'Acampo Denise Van Outen Tinchy Stryder Billy Ocean Craig Phillips Holly Willoughby

Phillip Schofield Dolby Digital [2.35:1]

Distributo Lionsgate UK 7,671 ft +0 frames

Leeds, the present. When small-time businessman Keith Lemon falls into debt, his girlfriend Rosie is kidnapped by psychotic creditor Evil Steve. Visiting a convention for inventors in London, Keith becomes an overnight billionaire with the launch of a new mobile phone and adopts the lifestyle of a wealthy entrepreneur. His adviser and guardian angel Archimedes persuades him to free Rosie from her gangster-captors. Keith asks Rosie to marry him.

Looper

USA/China 2012 Director: Rian Johnson Certificate 15 118m 29s



Time team: Paul Dano, Joseph Gordon-Levitt

Reviewed by Sophie Mayer

Rian Johnson's previous films, *Brick* (2005) and The Brothers Bloom (2008), displayed a fascination with the noir world of con artists, stylised language, glamorous women and big guns. Looper does the same. It comes wrapped in a high-concept time-travel conundrum — a hitman is hired to kill his future self but fails to do so — that the older version of the protagonist tells his younger self not to think too much about, allowing the film to disregard its own

internal logic when convenient. Old Joe's advice is convincing, partly because he's played by Bruce Willis, signalling the influence of Terry Gilliam's 12 Monkeys (1995), itself influenced by Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962). As Gilliam did in his homage, Johnson indicates his debt to Marker through key images of a beautiful woman, even quoting the most famous shot in Marker's film, in which the remembered woman opens her eyes while lying in bed.

That quotation also marks the difference

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Ram Bergman James D. Stern Written by Rian Johnson Director of Photography Film Editor **Production Designe** Ed Verreaux **Original Music** Produced and Performed by Nathan Johnson with

Son Lux Chris Mears Supervising Sound Editor/ Sound Designer Jeremy Peirson Costume Designer Sharen Davis Visual Effects Hy*drau"lx Scanline VFX Base-FX Beijing Pixel Magic Incessant Rain Studios Visual Effects Animation

Stunt Co-ordinator Steven Ritzi **©**Looper Distribution, LLC Production Companies Endgame Entertainment presents in association with **DMG Entertainment** and FilmNation Entertainment a Ram Bergman production A film by Rian Johnson

Atomic Fiction

Supervised by China Film Co-production Corporation Douglas E. Hansen Julie Goldstein Peter Schlessel Joseph Gordon-Levitt Dan Mintz Peter Xiao Wenge Wu Bing

Cast **Bruce Willis** old Joe Joseph

Gordon-Levitt young Joe
Emily Blunt Sara Paul Dano Seth Noah Segan Kid Blue Piper Perabo Jeff Daniels

Pierce Gagnor Dolby Digital/D/ In Colour

Prints by [2.35:1] Distributor

10.663 ft +8 frames

Kansas, 2044, 'Loopers' are hitmen employed to murder targets sent back from a future where time travel has been invented. Joe, the son of a drug addict, takes a lucrative job as a looper, despite the catch: a final hit, known as 'closing the loop', will eventually require him to kill his 30 years' older future self when he is sent back in time to a designated place. When fellow looper Seth lets his older self go free, Joe hides him, but betrays him after having his savings threatened by Abe, his boss. When Joe's turn comes to kill his own future self, he hesitates, and Old Joe escapes. This failure resets events to the moment where Joe has to kill Old Joe, which he duly does before moving to Shanghai, where he marries, grows up and becomes Old Joe. Later he is sent back in time to the US, in possession of

crucial information about 'the Rainmaker', the future's criminal mastermind who has killed Old Joe's wife. Old Joe enlists the help of young Joe in his attempt to prevent this possible future. He hunts for two people who might be the future Rainmaker, while young Joe finds himself protecting a third candidate, Cid, and his mother Sara, on their farm. An attack on Sara prompts Cid to unleash his concealed telekinetic powers. Young Joe realises that Cid is the nascent Rainmaker. He contemplates killing him, but decides to save him at Sara's pleading. Old Joe takes down the looper system by killing Abe and all his lackeys, but young Joe will not let him kill Cid, instead changing the future by killing himself: Old Joe, whose life in Shanghai has now not occurred, disappears.

between the films: while it's the only moving image in La Jetée, which uses its rigorous composition of still images to examine and critique film's (special) effects on its audience, it's one among many knowing nods that make Looper a loop of cult films past. Younger Joe, played by Joseph Gordon-Levitt, stirs his coffee to a swirl à la Two or Three Things I Know About Her (1967) and jump-cuts around the city like the stars of *Breathless* (1960). But this JLG par JGL has little more to say about cinema than does the blinking of Older Joe's nameless, speechless wife, beyond suggesting an endless recycling whereby American noir influenced the nouvelle vaque, which fed back into neonoir such as Chinatown (1974), which was shanghaied by a new wave of Asian thrillers (Joe works as a hitman in Shanghai in a stylised, silent montage borrowing heavily from Asian hardboiled), with Johnson's new American noir returning it to its rightful birthplace.

The film's visual style and genre cues initially mesh *Blade Runner*-esque dystopian *noir* with the 1970s wave of thrillers that J. Hoberman called 'sunshine noir' for their contrast of shady dealings and blazing sunlight, with Joe moving between a Sin City-like urban highlife of strippers and drugs and an assassination site at the edge of a canefield. While not strictly at high noon, these locations invoke the western, and indeed the film shifts its action after Older Ioe's return to an isolated farmhouse on the other side of the canefield, where single mother Sara (who strafes Younger Joe with a cropduster as he approaches her farm) is raising her son Cid. The action of this half of the film is driven by Older Joe's quest to locate and kill Cid, who will grow up to become the Rainmaker, the ultraviolent mob boss who has killed Older Joe's wife and sent him back in time to be killed.

While the temporal flux appears to add a gloss of queasy, infanticidal complication to the ageold revenge tragedy, the film abandons the strict logic of revenge and time travel (which sets up the ethical conundrum in La Jetée) in favour of suggesting that noir's all-American roots lie in the western. Younger Joe is Shane, the romanticised killer who suicidally protects the classic womanand-child dyad in the belief that securing the domestic space will restore the social order. As Susan Faludi argues in *The Terror Dream*, the western is the screen dream of the American psyche, a fantasy of violent masculinity and conservative domesticity that US culture reaches for when it feels disempowered. The name of the future Big Bad – the Rainmaker – is suggestive of white constructions of Native American culture, showing up Johnson's generic (in both senses) future as a deeply conservative vision of an entwined national and cinematic past – a fantasy that time travel can take us back to women staying at home to be mothers and heroic men using their guns for good. Surely we need films that examine the causes of white male gun terrorism, not those that perpetuate it fetishistically, despite (or because of) a misguided, simplistic attempt to psychoanalyse its causes. Here it's all the mother's fault in the end: not quite the cherchez la femme that La jetée proposes. 9

Madagascar 3 **Europe's Most Wanted**

USA 2012, Directors: Eric Darnell, Conrad Vernon, Tom McGrath, Certificate PG 93m 17s

Reviewed by Andrew Osmond

In this computer-animated threequel, Madagascar's New York zoo expats endeavour to get home in a caper/chase yarn. Like Toy Story 3 (2010), Europe's Most Wanted ostensibly ends a trilogy, though it leaves room for further sequels. But whereas Pixar's film followed Disney in its grand emotional gestures, here DreamWorks aspires to the manic heights of Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck.

Slick and speedy, the film peaks early with a terrific car and plane chase through Monte Carlo, involving nuclear reactors and flying monkeys. Thankfully the rest doesn't fall too far short, with a routine but sturdy plotline stringing together funny gags and inspired fancy. Captain Chantal Dubois, the gendarme-cum-terminatrix intent on hunting down the animals (Frances McDormand), would steal most films but has competition here from Sacha Baron Cohen's lemur king, wooing a ruined-bruin dancing bear. (Taking a hint from Disney's Dumbo, the film makes the interspecies romance more affectingly hilarious because the snarling bear can't speak.)

Lacking Pixar's deeper human resonance, the film's cartoon approach pays off in the joyful, triumphant and mostly abstract show the animals perform when they join a circus. Their Olympic-class flying and diving confirms the old maxim that you can do anything in animation. 9

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Mireille Soria Mark Swift Screenplay Eric Darnel Noah Baumbach Visual Consultant Guillermo Navarro Editor Nick Fletcher Production **Designer** Kendal Cronkhite Shaindlin Music Hans Zimmer Sound Designer Will Files Head of Char

Rex Grignon @DreamWorks Animation LLC Production Company DreamWorks Animation SKG

Animation

Voice Cast Ben Stiller

Alex Chris Rock Marty

David Schwimmer Julien Cedric The Entertaine Maurice

Mort Tom McGrath Skipper Jessica Chastain Gia **Bryan Cranston** Martin Short Stefano

Frances McDormand Dubois

Jada Pinkett Smith Gloria Sacha Baron Cohen **Andy Richter**

Captain Chantal

Dolby Digital/ In Colour Prints by Technicolor

[1.85:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor Paramount Pictures UK

8,395ft +8 frames

Alex the lion, Marty the zebra, Gloria the hippo and Melman the giraffe are stranded in Africa Resolving to get back to their zoo in New York, they reach Monte Carlo and reunite with their penguin and chimp companions. They draw the attention of animal control officer Captain Chantal Dubois, who ruthlessly hunts them down. The animals travel across Europe in a circus train; the circus is in a woeful state but Alex inspires the performers and restores them to their former glory. Alex, Marty, Gloria and Melman return to their zoo but realise they can no longer live in captivity. They are waylaid by Dubois but the circus animals save the day. Alex and company join the circus.

On the Road

France/United Kingdom/Brazil/USA/Canada 2012 Director: Walter Salles

Reviewed by Sophie Mayer

If viewers stays for the end credits of On the Road, they hear Jack Kerouac reading his famous novel over a short, searingly bright sequence showing a young man, his back turned to the camera, sauntering down a railway track in a desert. Ambient and ambulatory, detaching audio from video, movement from narrative, this sequence captures in film the experiment that Kerouac undertook in prose in On the Road. Sadly, it's the only section that does; the film instead unreels sedately over two hours of travelling shots of picture-postcard American landscape, sparely soundtracked amid jukebox hits by Gustavo Santaolalla, who also scored Brokeback Mountain. Whereas Ang Lee's 2005 film was both a detailed hymn to, and critique of, Americana, Walter Salles's movie is a lavish museum piece. With period-perfect costumes and cars draped around the attractive bodies of young performers Sam Riley, Garrett Hedlund and Kristen Stewart, the film is more an extended Urban Outfitters advertisement than an essay on, or into, the exciting experiments of Beat Cinema.

Given that On the Road, as a book, has become an accessory to the beatnik and hipster chic commercialised by chain stores since Gap, perhaps Salles's film fittingly reflects its afterlife. It's fitting, too, that the only interruptions to the film's palatability - in which even cottonpicking is rendered as a languidly erotic summer vacation for protagonist Sal Paradise – come from seasoned performers in cameo roles. Steve Buscemi is convincingly seedy and sympathetic as a salesman buying sex from Sal's friend and hero Dean Moriarty, emphasising the extent to which Riley (Sal) and Hedlund (Dean) are out of their depths, but it's Viggo Mortensen who steals not only his scenes but the film, with a brilliantly unhinged performance as Old Bull Lee, Kerouac's pseudonym for writer William Burroughs. Mortensen's performance has the genuine, and ferocious, frisson of inhabitation that the biopic demands: alternately gun-crazy, butt naked and sharply observant. His presence is suggestive of another potential film lost inside this version's obsession with cool youth, as are the well-realised scenes with Sal's family, which bode well for an adaptation of Maggie Cassidy, Kerouac's realist roman à clef, but are tonally at odds with the attempts to show the bright young things as they "burn, burn, burn".

For all its modernising attempts to empathise with the abandoned and objectified female characters, the film can neither fully indict its principals' behaviour nor celebrate it, becoming coy in the metronomically regular sex scenes that further showcase the attractive bodies cast. Stewart and Kirsten Dunst, as Dean's wives Marylou and Camille respectively, make the best of underwritten characters, as does Alice Braga as Sal's almost-silent girlfriend Terry. Riley does bring a hooded-eyed (if one-note) intensity to Sal, similar to his Ian Curtis in Control (2007), but Hedlund fails utterly to convey the magnetic charisma that made Neal Cassady (the real-life model for Dean Moriarty) the linchpin and muse of the Beat scene, thus rendering the film more or less null.

Leaning heavily on biographical



Beat routes: Kristen Stewart

material concerning Dean/Neal's bisexuality that is present only implicitly in the novel, the film uses sex (or its intimations) to replace its source's orgasmic reveries of road travel and jazz, both of which are minimised as screen presences. The other rhythmic structure is writing: Kerouac the writer is fused with Sal the character, so that the film is punctuated with scenes of Sal's spontaneous writing, sporadically accompanied by voiceover. It ends with the typing of the novel in a continuous scroll. Kerouac claimed to have written the book from scratch and without editing in three weeks; the film hedges its bets by giving the viewer both Sal's note-making and the myth.

In fusing the biography to the novel, it does a disservice to both, neither making room for a

critical reappraisal of Kerouac's life nor allowing the space for an inventive adaptation that parallels the novel. Salles's 2004 Che Guevara film The Motorcycle Diaries did something similar, albeit with a less well-read book. In addition, that film had a political message, however alternately soft-soaped and didactic, concerned as it was with engaging younger viewers with the crucial formation of the revolutionary who launched a thousand T-shirts. Under its on-trend, Mad Men-lite look, On the Road barely hazards a suggestion that the Beats' experiments in life and art would open the field for the liberation protests of the 1960s. Its conservative cinematic style looks hopelessly square next to 2010's adaptation/documentary Howl, let alone the films Jack Sargeant calls Beat Cinema. 9

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Nathanael Karmitz Charles Gillibert Rebecca Yeldham Roman Coppola Screenplay José Rivera From the novel by Jack Kerouad Director of Photography Eric Gautier Editor François Gedigier **Production Designer** Carlos Conti Music

Gustavo Santaolalla featuring Charlie Haden Brian Blade Supervising Sound Editor Vanesa Lorena Tate Costume Design Danny Glicker

©MK2, Film4, Videofilmes, France 2 Cinéma Production Companies **Production Companies** Presented by MK2 and American Zoetrope A Jerry Leider Company production in association with Vanguard Films An MK2 coproduction with . Videofilmes In co-production with France 2 Cinéma In association with Film4 With the participation of France Télévisions, Canal+ and Cine+ Produced with the

- Crédit d'impôt cinéma et television, Canada - Film or Video Production Services Tax Credit **Executive Producer** Francis Ford Coppola John Williams Jerry Leider Tessa Ross Arpad Busson

assistance of Québec

Cast Garrett Hedlund Dean Moriarty Sam Riley
Sal Paradise
Kristen Stewart
Marylou
Amy Adams
Jane
Tom Sturridge
Carlo Marx
Danny Morgan
Ed Dunkel
Alice Braga
Terry
Elisabeth Moss
Galatea Dunkel
Kirsten Dunst
Camille
Vierzo Mortensen

Old Bull Lee **Steve Buscemi** tall, thin salesman

Dolby Digital/DTS In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor Lionsgate UK

French theatrical title
Sur la route

New York, 1948. Writer Sal Paradise meets traveller Dean Moriarty, recently arrived from Denver with his 16-year-old girlfriend Marylou. Dean is fascinated by Sal's writing and Sal by Dean's wildness. With mutual friend Carlo Marx, they absorb New York's jazz nightlife but Dean is restless and returns to Denver. Sal, romanced by tales of the road, soon follows, finding Dean spending days with Marylou, evenings with set designer Camille and nights on Benzedrine with Carlo. Sal travels on, picking cotton and getting together with farmworker Terry before returning to his mother in New York. Dean arrives unannounced at the Paradise

family's Christmas celebration, with Marylou and their friend Ed Dunkel in tow. After a New Year's Eve party, they and Sal set out to reunite Ed with his wife Galatea, whom he's left in Louisiana, at the home of writer Old Bull Lee and his wife Jane. Sal, Dean and Marylou then head for San Francisco, where Dean leaves them for the pregnant Camille, who kicks him out. Sal and Dean share a car to Denver with a salesman who pays Dean for sex. Dean tries and fails to find his father and he and Sal travel to Mexico, where Dean abandons Sal with dysentery. Back in New York in 1950, Sal is accosted by Dean, prompting him to write about his experiences.

The Penguin King 3D

Directors: Anthony Geffen, Sias Wilson Certificate LL 78m 4s

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

The appeal of penguins for natural-history documentarists remains undimmed. From The Great White Silence (1924) to March of the Penguins (2005) and the BBC's Frozen Planet (2011), they've been a perennial source of amused fascination – little wonder their stock is so high in animated fiction. The Penguin King 3D, with its artificially rendered 'story' and a tone that appears tailored for younger viewers, in some ways straddles the divide between the traditional wildlife documentary and the likes of Happy Feet (2006). Set to David Attenborough's sure-handed narration, the film follows one King Penguin from adolescence to maturity on the dauntingly inhospitable terrain of South Georgia, a remote sub-Antarctic island. Returning from ocean roaming to 'Penguin City', a six-million-strong colony, the King goes about the exacting business of finding a mate and becoming a father.

The film's makers are upfront about using footage of several penguins to manufacture an individual story with a composite character, but even so it's hard not to feel manipulated. Shrewd editing maximises drama and pulls at the heartstrings and cutesy anthropomorphism occasionally creeps in: after a tragedy, the cameras slow down the King's movement so that he resembles a human shaking his head in grave denial. The King is even provided with comic support – a pair of calamity-prone 'cousins' who belatedly toughen up.

Still, the immediacy of the images is arresting, the film deploying 3D intelligently to convey the scale of the island and the sheer size of the colony. A canny ploy is to plant the camera at a low level in the midst of the massed ranks of stationary penguins, so that the viewer becomes just another colonist. The island's other wildlife – blubbery, flatulent heaps of elephant seals, brutal giant petrels, orange-quiffed Macaroni Penguins – is expertly captured, although occasional diversions to look at the parallel maturation of an albatross seem tacked on. It's an imaginative twist on the nature film, despite its rather transparent construction. §

Credits and Synopsis

Anthony Geffen
Written by
David Attenborough
Cinematographer
Simon Niblett
Film Editor
Rob Hall
Music
James Edward
Barker
Narrated by
David Attenborough

Producer

Production Companies An Atlantic Productions film in association with Sky 3D and Galileo Digital Entertainment

In Colour [1.85:1] Some screen

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor Kaleidoscope Entertainment

7,026 ft +0 frames

A nature film using real footage and an artificial story to follow the life of a King Penguin on the remote sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia. Returning to the colony after years at sea, the penguin eventually finds a mate. The pair face challenges in feeding their chick and protecting it from predators. When his mate perishes, the penguin raises his chick alone.

Pitch Perfect

USA 2012 Director: Jason Moore Certificate 12A 112m 1s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel



It's hardly surprising that Mickey Rapkin's 2008 book *Pitch Perfect:* The Quest for Collegiate A Cappella Glory should have been optioned

immediately for adaptation to film (as the feature debut of Jason Moore, who directed Broadway's Avenue Q). After all, its story harmonises neatly with a current vogue for talent contests (from television's Got Talent franchise, American Idol and Glee to films like the Fame remake and the StreetDance series) while also drawing on and updating the older, largely untapped tradition of unaccompanied singing (though NBC's The Sing-Off got there first).

This collision of old and new is embodied by Beca (Anna Kendrick), a Barden University fresher and wannabe DJ who is recruited into the Bellas, the campus's all-female a cappella group, after being heard singing David Guetta's 'Titanium' in the shower. Beca then finds herself forced by the group's uptight leader Aubrey (Anna Camp) to stick to a stale song-list from the 1980s that practically guarantees failure at the annual intercollegiate championships. Like Beca laying down tracks on her computer or arranging compositions for the Bellas, Pitch Perfect mashes up a lot of routines which, though overfamiliar in themselves, are lent a certain novelty in the (re)mix. Just as different musical styles are made to mingle and merge, comedy is counterpointed by drama and the loud, scattergun one-liners of Fat Amy (Rebel Wilson) offset the whispered, controlled insanities of her fellow singer Lilly (Hana Mae Lee). Meanwhile, competition commentators John (John Michael Higgins) and Gail (Elizabeth Banks) deliver a hilariously inappropriate Statler and Waldorfstyle perspective from offstage.

There is also, as is the postmodern way, plenty of cake had and eaten too. Fat jokes, gay jokes, Jewish jokes, woman jokes, all as old-fangled and outmoded as a barbershop



Choral history: Rebel Wilson, Anna Camp

quartet, are reconstructed by a script from Kay Cannon (TV's 30 Rock and New Girl) that, with sharp, self-conscious irony, acknowledges and owns these gags for exactly what they are, less bothered whether we are laughing with or at than that we are laughing. Discussing films with Jesse (Skylar Astin), her suitor from allmale rival group the Treblemakers, Beca may complain that endings are always too predictable but that doesn't stop Pitch Perfect itself from ending utterly predictably, with Beca's musical innovations leading the underdog Bellas to victory and with Beca and Jesse finally kissing in full accordance with romcom expectation. In response to Beca's avowed hatred of cinema, Jesse prescribes *The Breakfast Club* ("Greatest ending to any movie ever!") and, sure enough, the beats of both that film's plot and its soundtrack find their way into *Pitch Perfect* itself. For all the recycling and refashioning, it is still essentially the same old song – in much the same way that, no matter how you dress him, John remains, in Gail's words, "a misogynist at heart".

The songs themselves, however, performed by the cast without musical accompaniment (save for a disposable drinks cup used as percussion in Beca's breathtaking audition for the Bellas), offer more straightforward pleasures. §

The Possession

USA 2011 Director: Ole Bornedal Certificate 15 92m 5s

Reviewed by Carmen Gray

The unoriginal title of director Ole Bornedal's *The Possession* suits this stale take on the demonic-child horror template. Though based on a true story, it's really just a rehash of *The Exorcist* (1973), its superficial rechannelling through Hasidic Judaism failing to freshen the typically Catholicism-based genre.

The plot loosely stems from an *LA Times* article about the eBay auction of a dybbuk box — a Jewish cabinet said to house a dislocated spirit. When one such carved box originating from a Polish village is prised open by its elderly owner in the film's opening scene, we witness the full violent wrath inside, minimising any suspenseful escalation to the eventual exorcism.

When the antique is offloaded at a New York yard sale, the young daughter of a recently divorced couple (Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Kyra Sedgwick, whose solid performances can't invigorate a lifeless script) buys it and falls under its influence. As in Andrzej Zulawski's cult classic *Possession* (1981), supernatural household disruptions reflect unease over modern family dissolution, though here character psychologies are thin. Tangible effects (a hand emerging from a throat, a moth swarm, spontaneously bleeding eyes) are relied on to drive a film that, for all its conscientiously constructed shocks, leaves no lingering disquiet. §

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Sam Raimi Robert Tapert J.R. Young Written by Juliet Snowden Stiles White Director of Photography Dan Laustsen **Editors** Eric L. Beason Anders Villadsen Production Designer Rachel O'Toole Music Anton Sanko Sound Mixer Mark Noda Costume Designer

©Box Productions, LLC Production Companies

Carla Hetland

Sam Raimi presents Lionsgate and Ghost House Pictures present An Ole Bornedal film Executive Producers Stan Wertlieb Peter Schlessel John Sacchi Nathan Kahane Joe Drake Michael Paseornek

Cast
Jeffrey Dean
Morgan
Clyde
Kyra Sedgwick
Stephanie
Madison Davenpor
Hannah
Natasha Calis

Grant Show

Matisyahu
Tzadok
Rob LaBelle
Russell
Nana Ghewonyo
Darius
Anna Hagan
Eleanor
Brenda M. Crichlow
Miss Shandy
Jay Brazeau
Professor McMannis

Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor Lionsgate UK

8,287 ft +8 frames

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Paul Brooks Max Handelman Elizabeth Banks Screenplay Kay Cannon Based on the book by Mickey Rapkin Director of Photography Julio Macat Edited by Lisa Zeno Churgin Production Designer Barry Robison Christophe Beck Production Sound Mixers Lee Orloff Paul Ledford Costume Designer Salvador Perez ©Universal Studios

©Universal Studios Production Companies Universal Pictures and Gold Circle Films present a Gold Circle Films/Brownstone production **Executive Producer** Scott Niemeyer

Cast
Anna Kendrick
Beca
Skylar Astin
Jesse
Ben Platt
Benji
Brittany Snow
Chloe
Anna Camp
Aubrey
Rebel Wilson

Rebel Wilson
Fat Amy
Alexis Knapp
Stacie
Ester Dean
Cynthia Rose
Hana Mae Lee
Lilly

Kelley Alice Jakle Jessica Wanetah Walmsley Denise Shelley Regner Ashlev Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS In Colour [1.85:1]

Distributor Universal Pictures International UK & Eire

10,081 ft +8 frames

US, the present, Beca has reluctantly come to Barden University, where her divorced father teaches, ever though she would rather mash up tunes as a DJ. Overheard singing in the shower, Beca is invited to audition for all-female a cappella group the Barden Bellas. The previous year, the Bellas lost to all-male group the Treblemakers in the finals of the collegiate championship after their anxious leader Aubrey vomited on stage. Others soon join the group, including over-candid Fat Amy, over-sexed Stacie and whispering Lilly. Meanwhile freshman Jesse gets into the Treblemakers, while his nerdy roommate Benji is unfairly rejected by lead singer Bumper. As Beca bonds with Jesse over 'The Breakfast Club' she clashes with traditionalist Aubrey over the Bellas' old-fashioned repertoire. When Aubrey blames the Bellas' loss at the semi-finals on Beca's improvisations, Beca quits and also walks out on Jesse - but the team that beat them is disqualified, opening a path to the finals for the Bellas. Beca makes up with Aubrey, and is invited to arrange the Bellas' performance. Benji joins the Treblemakers after Bumper abandons them for a singing gig in LA. Beca's mash-up of songs from different genres (including a song from the soundtrack to 'The Breakfast Club') wins the Bellas the championship. Beca and Jesse kiss.

New York, present day. An elderly woman is seriously injured after opening a Hebrew-inscribed box, from which a demon escapes. The box is bought at a yard sale by Em, the youngest daughter of divorcing couple Clyde and Stephanie. Em and sister Hannah divide their time between the family home and their father's new house, where Em opens the box Possessed, she starts to display erratic mood swings and becomes violent. Inexplicable events occur, including a moth swarm; Em's teacher, alone with the box, is thrown through a window. Consulting experts, Clyde learns that the box is for containing a dybbuk - a spirit - and asks a rabbi for help. A hospital X-ray reveals a second being inside Em. Clyde and the rabbi's son Tzadok perform an exorcism, trapping the dvbbuk inside the box. The family is reunited. Tzadok is involved in a car accident; the box is thrown on to

Private Peaceful

United Kingdom 2012 Director: Pat O'Connor Certificate 12A 102m 21s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

"If children are to love history, we must tell them the brutal truth," *War Horse* author Michael Morpurgo once insisted. Obediently, this gritty yet handsome adaptation of *Private Peaceful*, his children's novel about human (rather than equine) fortitude in World War I, doesn't stint on the grisly details. Rats seethe out of a ruptured trench wall, great plumes of exploded earth and shrill screams accompany men going



Credits and Synopsis

Producers Guy de Beaujeu Simon Reade Screenplay Simon Reade Based on the novel by Michael Morpurgo Director of Photography Jerzy Zielinski Editor Humphrey Dixon Production **Designer** Adrian Smith Music Rachel Portman Production Sound Mixer John Mooney Costume Designer Anushia Nieradzik Stunt Co-ordinator

©Private Peaceful Productions Plc Production Companies Eagle Media presents a Guy De Beaujeu/Simon Reade/Fluidity

Films production A Pat O'Connor film Produced by Fluidity Films in association with Poonamallee Productions Developed in association with Peppermint Pictures Executive **Producers** Michael Morpurgo Jack Bowyer John Broxup Martin Hill Damian Perl Jo Podmore Nick Quested

Cast George Mackay Thomas Peaceful, Tommo' Jack O'Connell Charlie Peaceful Alexandra Roach Molly Monks Frances de la Tour Grandma Wolf

Rhvs Thomas

Austin Shaw

Rhian Williams

Richard Griffiths John Lynch Sergeant Hanley Maxine Peake Hazel Peaceful Samuel Bottomley young Tommo Hero Fiennes-Tiffin young Charlie
Izzy Meikle-Small young Molly **Anna Carteret** colonel's wife Stephen Kennedy James Peaceful James Laurenson Major Fitzpatrick **Angus Wright** ptain Barnes Eline Powell

Dolby digital
kay In Colour
ceful, [1.85:1]

Distributor Eagle Rock Group

9,211 ft +8 frames

The Western Front, 1916. Private Tommo Peaceful reviews his life from an army jail cell. We learn that a Private Peaceful is scheduled to die by firing squad. The action flashes back to Devon, eight years earlier. Tommo's forester father dies saving him from a falling tree. Tommo and his elder brother Charlie are forced to leave school and work for a tyrannical local landowner, known only as 'the colonel'. Both fall in love with Molly, the new forester's daughter. Sacked for disobedience, the two brothers work for a pittance as farmhands. Charlie gets Molly pregnant and marries her. Tommo is secretly heartbroken. When war is declared, Tommo enlists, lying about his age. Charlie enlists too and protects Tommo in the trenches but is sent home wounded. A stray shell kills Tommo's local girlfriend Anna. Charlie returns to the Front. When he stays with the injured Tommo in no-man's-land rather than charge the enemy, both brothers are court-martialled. Tommo confesses to Charlie that he caused his father's death by running away during tree felling. Charlie is sentenced to death and is shot by firing squad. Tommo resolves to survive the war, to protect Molly and his nephew.

unpleasant John Lynch) demands obeisance at gunpoint as the film fleshes out the novel's atmospheric battlefield scenes in fine style.

Compared with Steven Spielberg's grandiose and epic treatment of War Horse (2011), full of lavishly sun-dappled Edwardian rural landscapes and vast, teeming battlefields, this is a small and intimate affair, cleaving closely to the hardships suffered by the two Peaceful brothers in peacetime and at war. While it comes to the screen without War Horse's high profile, it possesses several narrative advantages over its predecessor, chief among them being expressive two-legged protagonists, a fluid rather than episodic structure and a distinctly less sentimental tone. Here, the rural life that war tears Tommo and Charlie away from is far from idyllic, bedevilled by poverty and fealty to landowners like Richard Griffiths's fruitily autocratic colonel, who beckons his teenage workers to enlist with a stern finger and gimlet eye that recall the famous Kitchener recruiting poster.

Unusually for a family film, we're steadily fed pointed political insights into the flagrant abuses of the pre-war rural poor, yoked via their lease and livelihood to the 'big house', as Tommo and Charlie are flung summarily into the colonel's staff on their father's death and then dismissed over a trifling disobedience. Although we know from the start that one of the brothers is ultimately condemned to death for desertion, screenwriter Simon Reade slips in a new and neat conceit to keep us wondering who it will be. Otherwise he is doggedly faithful to the novel, choosing to give the welter of hardships their due weight as contributory factors in the brothers' impermeable bond. Unfortunately he also transplants Morpurgo's broad-strokes characterisation so that the hated authority figures hiss and lash out like panto villains. Of the supporting cast, only Maxine Peake's doughty mother can slip some light and shade into her portraval with Alexandra Roach's Molly, the contested love interest for both brothers, reduced to piteous pinny-clad bleating from the margins. The film's real interest lies with the brothers and is sustained by well-balanced performances, George Mackay's timid, reflective Tommo in thrall to Jack O'Connell's brasher, tougher Charlie.

Director Pat O'Connor, experienced with prestigious adaptations since 1998's Dancing at Lughnasa, proves a safe if unsurprising pair of hands, letting the brothers' relationship breathe enough to signal a useful ambivalence but giving a visceral charge to the battle scenes. DP Jerzy Zielinski similarly keeps the film's palette keenly attuned to its moods, warm country hues giving way to muddy greys on the Western Front. For the adult viewer, the film's sympathetic adaptation of its well-loved source is both its strength and its weakness. Perhaps because Morpurgo was closely involved as executive producer, the film retains the clear-eyed observations of the original but also its childfriendly, simplified treatment of social themes. Like the famous music-hall monologue, this is a world where, unerringly, "It's the poor what gets the blame/Ain't it all a blooming shame?" §

Pusher

United Kingdom 2012 Director: Luis Prieto Certificate 18 88m 46s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

When Nicolas Winding Refn's streetwise crime pic Pusher emerged from Denmark in 1996, it was a statement of intent, announcing the desire to make low-slung, American-influenced genre flicks in a country more accustomed to turning out rather worthier arthouse fare. It started Refn off on a fascinating career trajectory that almost inevitably took him towards a Hollywood genre assignment in *Drive* (2011) and gave Mads Mikkelsen, now Denmark's signature actor on the international scene, his breakthrough role as the drug-dealer protagonist's loopy sidekick. What then is the point of remaking it 16 years later in Britain, a nation not exactly afflicted by a dearth of Americaninfluenced crime movies with a local twist?

It's a question this newcomer never really answers but in and of itself it's an adequate response to the neatly structured storyline underlying the apparent casualness of the Danish original. Spanish director Luis Prieto's remit has obviously been to deliver youth appeal by making it look rather slicker this time round, employing a whole battery of fast cuts and neon-tinted lighting in sundry hyped-up scenes of drug-taking and dance-floor carousing, scored to a somewhat predictable collection of electro textures by Orbital. Much of this seems merely passé, lacking the injection of attitude that would have signalled an ironic intent, but it would be a shame if the rather secondhand packaging were to distract attention from the generally assured performances, which are by far the film's strongest suit.

Richard Coyle, for instance, manages to hint at the salvageable humanity behind central character Frank's succession of ruthlessly egodriven bad decisions as he goes the wrong way about trying to outwit the Turkish supplier to whom he already owes a pile of money. Certainly, it was one of the producers' best ideas to have charismatic Croatian actor Zlatko Buric reprise his part as the Turkish 'Mr Big' Milo (a role he's honed throughout Refn's *Pusher* trilogy) and he transcends the somewhat clichéd role, energetic and likeable as the canny supplier who wants to treat Frank like a son but will reluctantly have him roughed up or electrocuted if his behaviour



Narked off: Zlatko Buric, Richard Covle

Raaz 3 The Third Dimension

Director: Vikram Bhatt Certificate 15 138m 53s



The performing dark arts: Bipasha Basu

Reviewed by Naman Ramanchadran

The Bhatt brothers' Vishesh Films specialises in making sequels in name only - as with the Jannat, Jism and Murder series. Thus Raaz 3 has little in common with Raaz (2002) or Raaz: The Mystery Continues (2009) save some actors (Bipasha Basu and Emraan Hashmi) and some character names.

Here, the story of a Bollywood actress turning to the dark arts to destroy her rival plays out like a comedy – unintentionally so, because the director, Vikram Bhatt (no relation to the producers), and the actors play it deadly straight. Amid the stately pacing and bloated 139-minute running time, Raaz 3 has little going for it, especially not in the shock, scares and thrills department, and the 3D does nothing to enhance the experience. One is left, therefore, with little to do but marvel at the pearls of wisdom to be gleaned from the film: the best way to shut up a Bollywood actress having hysterics is to have sex with her; some actresses in the prolific Indian film industry are willing to mate with maggotridden spirits to gain power over their rivals. We also find out that some spirits can communicate via telephone. Can't ask for more, really. 9

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Rupert Preston Christopher Simon Written by Matthew Read Based on the original screenplay Pusher by Nicolas Winding Refn and Jens Dah Director of Photography Simon Dennis Kim Gaster **Designer** Sarah Webste Music Composed by

Orbital **Sound Recordist** Victoria Franzen Costume Designer Alexandra Mann

©Exponential Media

Production Companies Vertigo Films presents a Vertigo Films & Embargo Films production in association with

proves disappointing. Although Bronson

Webb is a poor substitute for Mikkelsen as the

comic-relief right-hand man, former model

Agyness Deyn is another success, hinting at

vulnerable dancer/escort with whom Frank

the tunnel vision of his own petty schemes.

to develop, instead remaining locked like

genuine emotional life in her portrayal of the

might find solace if he were able to move beyond

Their scenes together hint at a dimensionality

of character that Prieto's film, to its cost, refuses

Frank in a vein of macho posturing – waving

firearms, delivering beatings and hoovering

up illicit substances at regular intervals. The

who won't admit his own failings, though as

such its progress is relatively easy to surmise

and its central focus not the most likeable of

since this follows Refn's storyline so closely

there's not much room left for surprise. 9

individuals. One can only assume the intended

audience is those who've never seen the original,

plotting winds up the tension efficiently enough, piling the pressure on a protagonist

> Exponential Media Executive Producers Nicholas Winding Refn Allan Niblo James Richardson Nigel Williams Paul Steadman

Cast Richard Coyle Frank **Bronson Webb** Tony Agyness Deyn

Mem Ferda Hakan

Paul Kaye Fitz Zlatko Buric Daisy Lewis Danaka Neil Maskell **Bill Thomas**

Ray Callaghan Adam Foster Tracy Green

F2.35:11

Distributor Vertigo Films

London, present day. Heavily in debt to his supplier Milo, small-time drug dealer Frank sends Danaka to Amsterdam for a consignment, planning to sell it for himself to raise the money. A chance meeting with old prison acquaintance Marlon offers him another lucrative opportunity to skim a cut from the sale of Milo's produce. It turns out to be a police sting but Frank manages to evade capture and dump the drugs in a lake. The police have no evidence against him - except for a signed statement from his sidekick Tony.

Milo is sceptical and demands that his debts now be repaid in full. After giving Tony a severe beating for grassing on him, Frank struggles to raise the money and as pressure mounts he spends time with dancer Flo. Danaka returns from the Dutch trip emptyhanded, leaving Frank in deeper trouble, but he steals a pistol from a firearms dealer and robs regular client Fitz of his drugs stash. Apprehended by Milo's henchmen, Frank escapes by shooting one of them and plans to flee the country with Flo. After gathering his remaining cash, he sells the stolen drugs at a club but a conciliatory call from Milo makes him change his mind about leaving. Feeling betrayed, Flo snatches his money and speeds off in a cab. Frank now faces Milo's retribution.

Credits and Synopsis

Manesh Bhatt Mukesh Bhatt Written by Shagufta Rafique Director of Photography Pravin Rhatt Kuldeep Mehan Jeet Gannguli Rashid Khan Lyrics Sanjay Masoom Kumaa Rashid Khan

Produced by

Companies Fox Star Studios Executive Producer Kumkum Saigal

Cast Bipasha Basu Shanaya Kejal Emraan Hashmi Aditva Esha Gupta Saniana Dhanrai Manish Chaudhary

Tara Dutt, evil spirit Zeeshan Khalid Agoo Dadaa Dolby Digital

In Coloui [2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D Fox Star Studios

12.499 ft +8 frames

Mumbai, the present. Shanaya is a Bollywood star on the wane. She is extremely superstitious. When she loses out on an acting award to her rival Saniana, who is also her half-sister, Shanaya resorts to black magic to destroy Sanjana's career. Shanaya enlists the help of her lover, the director Aditya, who is indebted to her for making his career in Bollywood. Aditya laces Sanjana's drink with some specially treated water and she begins to hallucinate; imagining that she is being ravaged by a swarm of cockroaches, she strips naked at an industry party, destroying her reputation and career. Aditya falls in love with Sanjana and turns on Shanaya. He confronts the dark side to rescue Sanjana's captive soul. Shanaya commits suicide.

Resident Evil Retribution

Germany/Canada/USA 2012 Director: Paul W.S. Anderson Certificate 15, 95m 30s

Reviewed by Roderick Hudson

A prerequisite for going into a Paul W.S. Anderson film is to accept that it will be stocked with archetypes instead of rounded-out characters and that they will communicate with one another in a telegraphic lingua franca made up of the dumbed-down dregs of a million action-movie screenplays. However, as with the blind man gifted with hypersensitive hearing, total disability in one area allows Anderson to excel in another: he is nonpareil in making game-movies, ever more elaborate Heath Robinson contraptions set into thrilling motion, the protagonists billiard balls bounced through the succession of clearly mapped prisons, junk planets, haunted starships and subterranean fortresses that act as the director's game boards. These are films whose sole and sound justification is their ornate kineticism.

Anderson is also one of the elect who seized on improved 3D technology as a tool to orchestrate action in depth. The opening sequence – an air-and-sea gun battle involving Milla Jovovich's warrior-woman Alice played out in a balletic slow-motion rewind – is the first of many articulately shot, elegantly punctuated set pieces, each the beneficiary of all the detailed individuation that Anderson's characters don't receive, each fitted to the lissom contours and gymnastic athleticism of his wife Jovovich like her body-glove catsuit. It may be overstating the case to place Anderson and Jovovich's collaboration alongside those of Lang and Joan Bennett, Rossellini and Bergman, Bergman and Ullmann, but it's one of the surest bets going at the multiplex. §

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Jeremy Bolt Paul W.S. Anderson Samuel Hadida Don Carmody Robert Kulze Written by Paul W.S. Anderson Based upon Capcom's videogame Resident Evil Director of Photography Glen MacPherson Edited by Niven Howie Production Designer Kevin Phipps Music tomandandy Sound Mixer John J. Thomson Visual Effects

Brett Chan Film International GmbH and Davis Films/Impact Picture (RE5) Inc.

Production **Companies** Screen Gems Constantin Film. Davis Films/Impact Pictures present a Constantin Film Davis Films/Impact Pictures production With assistance of Government of

Executive Producer

Martin Moszkowicz

Canada

Mr. X. Inc.

Stunt Co-ordinators

Nick Powell

Cast Milla Jovovich Michelle Rodriguez Rain Kevin Durand Barry Burton Sienna Guillory Jill Valentine

Dolby Digital/ Datasat Digital Sound/SDDS In Colour [2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Sony Pictures

8.595 ft +0 frames

Siberia, after the zombie apocalypse. Warriorwoman Alice is taken captive following a battle with agents of her former employer, the Umbrella Corporation. She finds herself in an alternate reality in a pre-apocalypse world but then awakens in a former Soviet nuclear submarine base now serving as Umbrella's proving ground. Set loose, Alice is pursued by Umbrella agents. She meets up with a group of allied operatives who take her to the surface. They engage the remaining Umbrella agents in battle and are victorious. Alice stands with mankind's last survivors on top of the White House in Washington DC, surrounded by the besieging undead.

Room 237 Being an Inquiry into The Shining in 9 Parts

USA 2012, Director: Rodney Ascher Certificate 15 102m 26s

Reviewed by Kim Newman



"The Shining is not an enigmatic film," Paul Mayersberg wrote in a perceptive Sight & Sound article in 1980 (reprinted in A Sight and Sound Reader: Science Fiction/

Horror). "It is actually about enigma." Mayersberg, no stranger to audience puzzlement as the screenwriter of several Nicolas Roeg films, was responding to the initially lukewarm UK reviews of Stanley Kubrick's film and was one of the first to hail it as a classic. Admittedly, the British press and public had seen the director-authorised truncated cut that's markedly inferior to the US release; this has remained the default British version of The Shining, though a reissue later this year will doubtless prompt a reassessment - Shelley Duvall's performance in particular benefits from the added breathing space.

The five commentators whose theories about The Shining are heard in Rodney Ascher's documentary Room 237 mostly shared the critics' early uneasiness with Kubrick's film, which was at once not what was apparently expected (a Grand-Guignol adaptation of Stephen King's haunted-house novel) and typical of the auteur who had made long, slow movies in the traditionally more action-packed genres of science fiction (2001: A Space Odyssey, 1968) and historical adventure (Barry Lyndon, 1975). However, all the interviewees have been drawn back time and again to the film, in various formats - in theatres (there's a fetishist recreation of the experience of *The Shining* using cannily adapted footage from Lamberto Bava's 1985 film *Demons*), on videocassette, DVD and Blu-ray. No mention is made, though, of variant aspect ratios (the film was shot open frame for eventual TV screenings because Kubrick disliked letterboxing, and this has allowed slips, such as the shadow of a helicopter, to creep into some releases), let alone the fact that the UK cut, which interviewee Bill Blakemore mentions seeing in Leicester Square, differs greatly from the film the other speakers saw - and perhaps this is why his interpretation diverges from theirs. For instance, all the scenes of the Torrance family watching television, central to some of these readings, were dropped from the British release.

For Blakemore, The Shining is 'all about' the persecution of the American Indian. He illustrates his theory by noting the many near-subliminal images of Native Americans in the film – which is set in a lodge-style hotel in Colorado, built on an Indian graveyard. This requires a kind of tunnel vision, leaving aside references to the Donner Party (a western atrocity not involving Native Americans) or the Gold Rush (a larger story than the displacement of native peoples) and American history in general, but it's on less shaky ground than the notion of historian Geoffrey Cocks that the film is 'all about' the Holocaust, chiefly because Jack Nicholson's character Jack Torrance uses a German typewriter (though the brand, Adler, also relates to the American Eagle images that recur) and because a dissolve in the final zoom into a photograph gives the



Surmise wide shut: 'Room 237'

protagonist a subliminal Hitler moustache.

Playwright Juli Kearns is more generalised in her theory that the film relates to classical mythology, noting the use of a labyrinth instead of the topiary animals of the novel (and backreferencing the fact that Killer's Kiss, an early Kubrick film, was a Minotaur production), while conspiracy theorist Jay Weidner soars off on a delightfully strange fantasy about the film being a coded confession on the director's part of his involvement in faking the moon footage purportedly brought back by Apollo 11. In contrast, musician John Fell Ryan – whose weird experiment is to screen the film forwards and backwards at the same time, adding new symmetries to a movie already awash with them - just picks at threads and unravels them, sharing with the mapmaking/ modelmaking Kearns an interest in the film's spatial (and other) impossibilities.

The upshot of all this very skilfully edited musing is to convince the viewer that something more is going on in *The Shining* than was advertised. Footage of Stephen King going crazy in front of a TV set in Creepshow is wittily used to stand in for his oft-expressed ire at the film (which he remade for TV – there are distracting, unfamiliar snippets here that parallel and subvert Kubrick's version). But the real meat comes in pointing out the odd – deliberate? - flaws in *The Shining*: a prominently placed chair that vanishes between shots (a wry joke at the expense of the psychokinetic frenzy seen in John Hough's underrated Legend of Hell House?); a carpet design that reverses at a crucial moment (given Kubrick's meticulousness, this must be deliberate – a rolling ball forces you to notice which way the octagons in the carpet run before the next shot has them going the other way); a minor character whose trousers change from moment to moment (a wardrobe glitch, or something only apparent in open frame, or the result of filming a scene over and over throughout a long shooting schedule so that an exact match was no longer possible?). Even Weidner, who might well be advancing his ideas with a semi-satirical edge, has a moment when his theory almost comes into focus, as

young Danny Torrance stands up to reveal that he's wearing an Apollo 11 sweater. It is possible that any moderately complex film is as open to diverse, Rashomon-like readings (Rashomon, for instance), and *Room 237* admits it's an area where a creator's intentions aren't necessarily germane to his achievements – but this is at once a fascinating exercise and another selection of paths through a major cinema labyrinth. 69

My Fair Lady (1964)

Doctor Dolittle

Schindler's

(1967)

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Tim Kirk

Original Music Composed by William Hutson Jonathan Snipes Sound Design/

Re-recording Mixer ©The Room 237 Group, LLC

Production

Company Highland Park Highland Park Communications company Executive P. David Ebersole Film Extracts Eyes Wide Shut (1999)Demons/ Dèmoni (1985) All the Presid

Men (1976) Keep America Beautiful Drums along the Mohawk (1939) Battle of Apache Pass (1952) 2001: A Space Odyssev (1968) Barry Lyndon (1975) List (1993) Fear and Desire (1953)Summer of '42 (1971) A Clockwork Orange (1971) Looker (1981) Agency (1980) Dèmoni 2 (1986) The Legend of Hell House (1973) Apocalypto (2006) Paths of Glory (1957) The Terror (1963) The Thief of Bagdad (1940) BrainWaves (1983) Dreamscape (1984) Spellbound (1945) Fellini - Satyricon

(1969)The Brain from Planet Arous (1957) The White Buffalo (1977) In Colour Dr Strangelove [1.78:1] or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying Distributor and Love the

Pigs (1933) Making The Shining (1980) Wolf (1984) An American Werewolf in London (1981) Sitting Bull at the Spirit Lake Massacre (1927) The Magic Mountain/Der Zauberberg (1982) Faust/Faust Eine deutsche Volkssage (1926) Jesus Christ Superstar (1973) The Killing (1956) The Beast in Heat/La bestia in calore (1977) Spartacus (1960)

The Eagle Has

Capricorr

One (1977)

Landed (1976)

Creepshow (1982)

The Three Little

Metrodome Distribution Ltd

9,219 ft +0 frames

Five interviewees - foreign correspondent Bill Blakemore, history professor Geoffrey Cocks, playwright Juli Kearns, musician John Fell Ryan and conspiracy theorist Jay Weidner - examine Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film 'The Shining' and ponder its hidden meanings.

Bomb (1963)

Jacket (1987)

Lolita (1962)

Killer's Kiss (1953)

Full Metal

Ruby Sparks

Directors: Jonathan Dayton, Valerie Faris Certificate 12A 102m 21s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

"Girls only want to sleep with me because they read my book in high school," novelist Calvin Weir-Fields (Paul Dano) whines in *Ruby Sparks*, a queasy romantic drama written by Dano's real-life girlfriend Zoe Kazan. Suffering writer's block ten years after the publication of his acclaimed first novel, Calvin is well-off but depressed, with only his brother Harry (Chris Messina) and dog Scotty for company. At night, he dreams of an unnamed girlfriend.

Calvin is embarrassed by Scotty, who urinates while squatting like a female dog. Therapist Dr Rosenthal (a heavily bearded Elliott Gould) suggests, as an exercise, writing a page about a girl who would find Scotty charming rather than embarrassing, and who might feel similarly amiable towards the dog's master. The exercise turns into a new novel, which Harry rejects as demonstrating an utter lack of understanding of women, lecturing Calvin that his rather conventional Manic Pixie Dream Girl bears no relation to any real woman outside a stunted male's imagination.

When Ruby (Kazan), Calvin's imaginary girl, shows up for real in his kitchen, this might seem like the beginning of a metaphorical riff on writing, relationships and the similarities between. But Calvin doesn't lose control of Ruby for long. Her only character trait is to

love Calvin, but free will inevitably leads her to want more space. "You don't have any friends," she complains. "I have you," he says. "That's a lot of pressure," Ruby reasonably responds.

There's a nifty screwball comedy to be made out of Calvin's attempts to literally rewrite Ruby's personality but this is po-faced drama. Ruby exists solely to teach Calvin that he should get some friends and not be completely dependent on one person's constant adoration. Calvin is an emotional void whose possessiveness culminates in a remarkably unpleasant scene in which he demonstrates his control over Ruby, making her shout out all the things she adores about him. As he pounds the typewriter, the cutting between the phallic platen slamming back and Ruby's involuntary rising shouting mimics the rhythm of intercourse — effectively, it's a cinematic violation.

Little Miss Sunshine directors Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris's bright, clear frames are unobtrusively well composed; technically, the film is above par. The premise offers shades of Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004), with a fixated man and a woman who refuses to be reduced to his emotional crutch. But instead it's just the rather humourless, unenlightening story of a truly horrible person and his equally empty creation, a metaphorical premise executed with flat literalism. §



Meet Ms Write: Paul Dano, Zoe Kazan

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Albert Berger
Ron Yerxa
Written by
Zoe Kazan
Director of
Photography
Matthew Libatique
Film Editor
Pamela Martin
Production Designer
Judy Becker
Music
Nick Urata
Sound Mixer
Edward Tise
Costume Designer
Nancy Steiner

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Pictures presents a Bona Fide production Made in association with Dune Entertainment Executive Producers Robert Graf Zoe Kazan Paul Dano Film Extracts

Cast
Paul Dano
Calvin Weir-Fields
Zoe Kazan
Ruby Sparks
Antonio Banderas
Mort
Annette Bening
Gertrude
Steve Coogan

Braindead (1992)

Langdon Tharp
Elliott Gould
Dr Rosenthal
Chris Messina
Harry
Alia Shawkat
Mabel
Aasif Mandvi
Cyrus Modi
Toni Trunks
Susie
Deborah Ann Woll
Lila

Dolby Digital/ Datasat Digital Sound/SDDS Colour by EFILM Prints by DeLuxe [1.85:1]

Distributor 20th Century Fox International (UK)

9,211 ft +8 frame:

Los Angeles, the present. Ten years after the publication of his highly acclaimed debut novel, 29-year-old Calvin Weir-Fields is blocked. His therapist suggests he write about his dreams of an imaginary girl. The one-page project becomes a new book. Calvin's fictional girl is called Ruby Sparks. Calvin's dog Scotty drags pieces of her clothing into the house and one day Ruby herself appears as his real-life girlfriend. Unaware that she's a character created by Calvin, Ruby becomes his adoring companion. However, she becomes increasingly restless and wants to spend more time by herself. Calvin writes changes into her personality to keep her devoted but this only makes things worse.

Restoring Ruby's free will, Calvin becomes jealous when she flirts with his editor at a party. To demonstrate his power over her, Calvin shows Ruby his typewriter and starts typing actions that she is forced to perform, upsetting her deeply. Calvin writes an ending to his book giving Ruby no memory of the events once she leaves his house and restoring her free will. He transforms their romance into a novel. Later, he runs into Ruby in a park. She has no memory of him, and they begin flirting.

Rust and Bone

France/Belgium 2012 Director: Jacques Audiard Certificate 15 122m 43s



Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Showing at The BFI London Film Festival A psychologically scarred boxer with a small son in tow embarks on a relationship with a beautiful young woman whose legs have been amputated by a killer whale.

It sounds like the plot of a silent melodrama - probably starring Lon Chaney - and there are certainly moments in Jacques Audiard's latest film where melodramatic contrivance is anything but skirted. The final ten minutes or so in particular strain credibility to snapping-point. An angelically blond small boy falls through the ice on a pond (quite why it didn't break when he and his much heavier father were standing there is anyone's guess), is pulled out after his father shatters the ice with his bare bleeding knuckles (a nearby sledge would have worked better but lacks the martyrdom quotient) and is rushed to hospital seemingly dead but makes a miraculous recovery. A few seconds of screen time later and the boy, his father (now a celebrated boxing champion) and the father's lover (the aforementioned amputee) have all reunited and become a blissful family unit. Roll credits.

To be fair, most of Rust and Bone (loosely adapted from a short-story collection of the same title by Canadian author Craig Davidson) is nowhere near as howlingly overdetermined as this, even if the initial premise takes some swallowing. Audiard has a sense of the tone and texture of working-class life which at times recalls Robert Guédiguian or the Dardenne brothers (whose Films du Fleuve company co-produced this) and the scenes involving Ali (Belgian actor Matthias Schoenaerts), his downto-earth sister Louise, her truck-driving partner Richard and their neighbours feel authentically gritty and hardscrabble. (Their quartier shows a side of Antibes far removed from the Côte d'Azur tourist glitz.) The bare-knuckle streetfighting scenes are likewise convincingly ugly and brutal, even if Stéphane Fontaine, Audiard's regular DP, brings his characteristically elegant visual acuity to these, as to the rest of the film.

But what partially keeps disbelief at bay, at least for much of the film's running time, is the acting, especially from the two principals. Schoenaerts, moving with the wary physicality of a man who suspects emotional commitment might sap his strength, confirms the promise he showed last year with his turn in Michael Roskam's Oscar-nominated Bullhead. Attempting to keep both Marion Cotillard's paraplegic Stéphanie and his five-year-old son Sam at a safe emotional distance proves too much for him; when the boy erupts in furious tears at the departure of some puppies he's grown fond of, Ali can only react to the outburst by slapping his son viciously. Stéphanie's demands he deals with by putting their sexual relationship on a strictly functional level; he tells her he'll come and service her whenever he's "operational".

As Stéphanie, Cotillard builds on her exceptional talent – already amply established in her multi-award-winning role as Piaf in *La Vie en rose* (2007) – for inhabiting damaged but ultimately indomitable characters. As a woman who, by her own admission,



Punch-drunk love: Marion Cotillard, Mattias Schoenaerts, Armand Verdure

loved to attract the lascivious male gaze, the impact of finding herself reduced to (almost literally) half a woman, the object of indifference or pity, brings her close to suicide. Her gradual return to life, aided by Ali's dispassionate attentions, culminates in a scene of irrepressible elation when, sitting in her wheelchair, she starts spontaneously repeating the hand gestures she formerly used to train the orcas.

Moments like these though can't finally

sustain the broken-backed, over-contrived plot. In his previous ill-matched-couple drama *Read My Lips* (2001), Audiard used the dynamic of his initial set-up, improbable though it was, to carry through the ramifications of the story. (Much the same, in more *noir* vein, could be said of *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* and *A Prophet.*) *Rust and Bone* never quite gets there: the rust flakes off, the bones show through. But a filmmaker of such originality and ambition can well be forgiven the occasional near-miss. §

Credits and Synopsis

Producers Pascal Caucheteux Martine Cassinelli Jacques Audiard Screenplay Thomas Bidegain Jacques Audiard Based on De rouille et d'os hy Craig Davidson Director of Photography Stéphane Fontaine Editor Juliette Welfling **Art Director** Michel Barthélémy Original Music Alexandre Desplat Sound Brigitte Taillandier Costumes Virginie Montel

©Why Not Productions, Page 114, France2 Cinéma, Les Films du Fleuve, Lunanime Production Companies A Why Not Productions, Page 114, France 2 Cinéma, Les Films Du Fleuve, RTBF (Belgian Television), Lumière and Lunanime co-production With the participation of Canal +, Ciné +, France Télévisions,

Centre du Cinéma et l'Audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, VOO and Fonds Audiovisuel Flamand With the support of the Région Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur, Département des Alpes Maritimes In partnership with the CNC, Wallonie and Casa Kafka Pictures - Dexia

Cast Marion Cotillard Stéphanie Matthias Schoenaerts Ali Armand Verdure

Armand Verdure Sam Céline Sallette Louise Corinne Masiero Anna Bouli Lanners Martial

Richard

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Jean-Michel Correia

Distributor Studiocanal Limited 11,044 ft +8 frames

French theatrical title

Antibes, France, the present. Thirtysomething Ali arrives from Belgium to stay with his sister Louise, with his five-year-old son Sam, whom he hardly knows, in tow. Louise is a cashier in a supermarket; her partner Richard is a long-distance lorry driver. On the strength of his martial-arts skills, Ali gets a job as a bouncer at a local nightclub, the Annexe. One night, he rescues a young woman, Stéphanie, from a violent situation and drives her home. Stéphanie trains orca whales at the Marineland park; when one jumps out of the water at her, her legs are badly injured and have to be amputated below the knee. Four months later, alone and depressed. Stéphanie phones Ali. Refusing to pity her, he insists she come swimming with him. Gradually, with his help, she regains her appetite for life and learns to walk on artificial legs. Ali gets a job with a security company; an older colleague, Martial, offers to act as his manager in illegal bare-knuckle fights. Stéphanie comes along to watch. Martial co-opts Ali into installing concealed security cameras to allow companies to spy on workers; one of the venues is the supermarket where Louise works. Ali and Stéphanie start having sex, on a purely therapeutic basis. Stéphanie tells Ali that she wants a more emotinoal relationship. The hidden cameras are discovered; Martial leaves town and Stéphanie takes over managing Ali's fights. Louise is sacked for taking home food past its sell-by date. When she discovers Ali helped set up the cameras, she kicks him out. He departs in the night, leaving Sam behind and with no word to Stéphanie, and heads for Strasbourg, where he joins a professional boxing team. Richard brings Sam to see his father; they go skating and Sam falls through the ice. Ali rescues him. The boy dies in hospital but is revived. A few months later, Ali - now united with Stéphanie and Sam as a family - is a champion boxer.

Sinister

United Kingdom 2012 Director: Scott Derrickson Certificate 15 109m 40s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Sinister opens with a jaw-droppingly simple home-movie mass murder as members of a family are lined up with hoods over their heads and nooses around their necks and the sawn-through branch of a tree in their garden falls, lifting them all off the ground to kick and struggle. Thereafter, the movie gives the recently overworked found-footage genre a well-deserved rest (though, strictly speaking, this is a film about finding footage) and pulls back to become a character study of a driven author who wants to recapture his early success and puts his family at risk to do so, even as it unfolds as a horror-mystery drama.

Writer-director Scott Derrickson paid his dues with a script credit on Urban Legends: Final Cut and Hellraiser: Inferno (both 2000) then had a breakthrough with the conservative shocker The Exorcism of Emily Rose (2005) and a big studio stumble with the remake of *The Day the Earth* Stood Still (2008). This is a step back into the horror field he understands, not entirely free of the moralising that gave his earlier work a faintly finger-wagging air but far more expertly put together. The script, which centres on the decision of true-crime writer Ellison Oswalt (Ethan Hawke) to move with his wife and kids into the house where the murders took place, doles out clues in throwaway lines (a deputy mentions that the murdered family "didn't have cause to contact the police in the short time they lived here") and odd circumstances such as the way the victims are identified in sitcom terms ('Dad', 'Mom', etc) in the childish pictures of the killings that Ellison discovers in the attic along with some grimly titled home movies ('Pool Party' for a mass drowning, etc).

Like the soundalike *Insidious* (2010), *Sinister* offers an array of infallible scare tactics – creepy faces looming, sudden noises, doors that open



Writing wrongs: Ethan Hawke

Sister

France/Switzerland 2012 Director: Ursula Meier

inexplicably, silent little ghost children – but also relies for its best shock on acting, cutting away from one of the home movies (featuring a lawnmower) to show Ellison's startled immediate reaction to it. Given the format, it would be easy to make the supporting characters straightforward plot tokens but Juliet Rylance is excellent as the hero's tough, concerned wife and Michael Hall D'Addario and Clare Foley are outstanding as kids with different, troubling habits (screaming/sleepwalking and compulsive mural-making). Vincent D'Onofrio pops in via Skype as an occult expert who explains some things but, of course, can't avert the impending doom. It's a familiar tale – a family moves into a haunted house and has a bad time – but expertly told, with enough narrative complications to distinguish it from the current run of paranormal curtain-twitching. 69

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Jason Blum Brian Kavanaugh Screenplay Scott Derrickson Director of Photography Christopher Nori Editors Frédéric Thorava David Schneider

Production Designer David Brisbin Music Christopher Young Sound Design Dane A. Davis Production Sound Mixe Jack Hutson Costume Designe Abby O'Sullivan Visual Effects

©Alliance Films (UK) Limited

Production Companies A Blumhouse and Automatik production Alliance Films presents in association with 1M Global a Scott

Derrickson film Producers Scott Derrickson Charles Layton

Cast **Fthan Hawke** Juliet Rylance Tracy Oswalt Fred Dalton Thompson sheriff James Ranson deputy Clare Foley Ashley Oswal Michael Hall D'Addario

Trevor Oswalt

[uncredited] Vincent D'Onofrio Professor Jonas

Dolby Digital In Colou [2.35:1]

Momentum Pictures

9,870 ft +0 frames

Ellison Oswalt, a once successful true-crime author, buys a house in which an entire family was once hanged. Ellison intends to write a book about the unsolved case, which he hopes will re-establish his reputation. He doesn't tell his wife Tracy or his children Ashley and Trevor about what happened in the house, though they soon find out. In the attic, Ellison finds a collection of home movies - not only of the hanging murders but also of other killings stretching back decades. Ellison tracks down these geographically scattered cases; in each one, a family was killed and a child vanished. All the families involved lived in a house where another family had died, and all themselves were killed after they moved on. Ellison's relationship with his family deteriorates, and the children are troubled by encounters with a spectral figure and other ghosts. After consulting an occultist, Ellison learns of an ancient demon, Bughul, who collects children. The haunting intensifies and the Oswalts worry that Bughul is trying to possess Trevor, so they quit the house to return to their former home. In his old attic, Ellison discovers extended cuts of the home movies, which he had tried to destroy; these reveal that each family was killed by the child who went missing. Leaving the hanging house completes the ritual. Ashley - under the influence of the demon - murders her parents and brother.

Reviewed by Isabel Stevens

Showina at The BFI London Film **Festival**

French-Swiss director Ursula Meier's assured Silver Bearwinning second feature returns to much the same subject as her promising 2008 debut Home: a dysfunctional,

disintegrating family living on the fringes of society. Yet whereas that ambitious tale of domestic breakdown shifted between naturalism and comedy before turning into something of a disaster fable, Sister is a much more simple and strictly social-realist affair.

Crafting a subtle, Dardennes-esque portrait of an unwanted kidult, Meier stays ever-faithful to the viewpoint of 12-year-old orphan Simon (Kacey Mottet Klein), sole breadwinner for himself and his beautiful but neglectful drifter of an older sister Louise (Léa Seydoux). 'The kid with the skis', he could be called, stealing equipment as he does from wealthy tourists in the resorts far above their cramped tower block at the mountain's base – and, in a nice touch, also raiding skiers' rucksacks for posh chalet-made sandwiches for their meals.

Meier holds back on the drama for much of the first half, content to let us get to know the pair. She draws excellent performances from both actors, Klein in particular. One moment he's a child - vulnerable, eager for affection – and the next he's a sparky, wily operator, trying to play the tough salesman and charming us with his broken-English one-liners straight from adventure

Anderson, Mottet Klein

magazines ("Can you feel the magic of powder?").

Meier intricately sketches the contours of Simon and Louise's relationship, alternating sullen, forlorn glances with moments of wild abandon as they tussle playfully and sometimes not so playfully. Resentment always simmers beneath the surface of this strange domestic set-up, where roles are reversed as Simon almost plays devoted father to Louise, hoping the money he earns might draw something like love out of her.

Careful never to get too carried away with the picturesque scenery, the film's beautiful, minimal cinematography (courtesy of Claire Denis's regular DP Agnès Godard) always emphasises the functional and industrial (pylons, funicular cables) while also setting up contrasts between the serene, open vistas of the slopes and Simon's small, claustrophobic home.

Drama when it does finally protrude is at first well handled. The sad, unexpected twist is softly spoken, dropped into a rare, happy moment, and is all the more shocking for it. There are a few plotting quibbles to be had (the time between Christmas and the end of the season speeds past, while Simon never seems to go to school). In addition, the final scenes with Gillian Anderson's rich tourist (the mother-figure

Simon craves) are a little too emotionally and symbolically loaded, but Meier certainly shows an eye for social critique with Anderson's frosty treatment of the two. A neat resolution isn't on the cards, though. For Simon and Louise, in this timely tale of financial woe, reconciliation may be nearer but happiness

is a long way off. 6

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Denis Freyd Ruth Waldburger Screenplay Antoine Jaccoud Ursula Meier with the collaboration of Gilles Taurand Dialogue Antoine Jaccoud Director of Photography Agnès Godard Editor Nelly Quettier Art Direction Ivan Niclass Music John Parish Sound Henri Maïkoff Etienne Curchod Valène Leroy Franco Piscopo Anna Van Brée

©Archipel 35 and Vega Film Production Companies Archipel 35 and Vega Film present in co-production with RTS Radio Télévision Suisse and Bande à part Films with the participation of Canal+ and Ciné+ with the support of Office Fédéral de la Culture (DFI) Suisse, Zürcher Filmstiftung, Fonds REGIO Films. Suissimage, Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée and Eurimages in association with Cofinova 8 and Soficinéma 7 an Archipel 35 and Vega Film co-production in co-production vith RTS Radio Télévision Suisse and Bande à part Films With the support of Fonds REGIO Films with the Loterie Romande and the Fondation vaudoise pour le cinéma, Fonds Culturel Suissimage, Canton du Valais/ Kanton Wallis - Fonds Culture et tourisme, Succès Cinéma, SRG SSR, Succès Passage Antenne Developed with the support of Centre images – Région Centre, Procirep, Angoa-Agicoa, MEDIA Programme

of the European

Union, MEDIA 121 Audiovisual Programme, a grant from SSA – Société Suisse des Auteurs, and Cofinova Executive Producer André Bouvard

Cast Léa Seydoux Louise Kacey Mottet Klein Simor Martin Compston Gillian Anderson English lady Jean-François Stévenin Yann Trégouët Gabin Lefebyre Marcus Dilon Ademi Dilon

Dolby Digital In Colour **F1.85:11**

Distributor

French theatrical title L'Enfant d'en haut

Switzerland, the present. Twelve-year-old orphan Simon supports himself and his unemployed and neglectful older sister Louise by stealing ski equipment from wealthy tourists in nearby resorts. Scottish cook Mike catches Simon with stolen goods but agrees to buy equipment from him to sell on. Simon tells Mike that both his parents died in a car crash. When Louise disappears with her new boyfriend over Christmas, Simon befriends tourist Kristin and her two young children, introducing himself as Julien, the son of hotel owners. When Simon is caught stealing by a tourist and beaten up. Louise helps him sell on some skis. but spends all the money. She tells her new boyfriend that Simon is only staying with her temporarily. Just as things are going well between the couple, Simon tells Louise's boyfriend that she is his mother, not his sister, and the relationship ends. Furious, Louise admits she never wanted Simon, takes all his money and disappears. The next morning Simon finds her unconscious and penniless on the ground outside their tower block. Desperate for money, Simon takes a younger friend up to the junior slopes to steal, but this angers Mike and he ends their deal. His boss catches the two young boys and bans them from the slopes. As the season comes to an end, Louise gets a cleaning job in the resort. Kristin finds Simon with her. He admits that he isn't Julien and tries to hug her. She discovers that he's stolen her watch and asks them both to leave. Louise is angry and Simon spends the night wandering the empty slopes. On his way down in the cable car in the morning, he sees Louise going up to look for him.

Sparkle

Director: Salim Akil Certificate 12A 116m 3s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

"Was my life not enough of a cautionary tale?" asks Emma (Whitney Houston), embittered mother of three, once a promising singer. As spoken by late diva Houston, the words have a queasy resonance far beyond the character's history but her presence is a minor component of this overstuffed potboiler. The original 1976 Sparkle began in church but this one begins in a grotty Detroit nightclub. Shifting the location from New York and the period by a decade, from 1958 to 1968, places this film closer to the original's loose source: the struggles of Diana Ross and the Supremes, whose growing pains included the alcoholism and ousting of founding member Florence Ballard in 1967. (It also positions Sparkle commercially closer to 2006's Dreamqirls, though Salim Akil's film is shot on sloppy digital at visibly lower cost.)

The plot remains effectively unchanged. Emma keeps a tight leash on her three daughters: rebellious Sister (Carmen Ejogo), demure songwriter Sparkle (R&B/pop star Jordin Sparks) and diligent aspiring medical student Dee (Tika Sumpter). But behind Emma's back, the sisters form a girl group under the guidance of Stix (Derek Luke), who's equally in love with Sparkle and the commercial potential of her songs.

The most provocative thread concerns Sister's marriage to self-loathing comic Satin Struthers (Mike Epps). His name's one letter off, but Satin's devilish temperament leads him to introduce Sister to cocaine and to regularly beat her. Before his true nature is discovered, though, he's the hero of the film's



Tika Sumpter, Carmen Ejogo, Jordin Sparks

best-conceived scene. Entering with Sister just as Reverend Bryce (Michael Beach) is blessing Emma's Sunday lunch, he cracks: "Now that's why black folks can't get ahead. We too busy praying." Emma is furious at Sister's choice of husband: "I think enough of you to introduce you to doctors and dentists and accountants," she seethes, "but you wanna whore with this coon." "I'm more of a Sambo," Satin deadpans. Aside from this overt dive into questions of black self-image and self-loathing over pandering to white folks (Satin openly admits his living involves "cooning" to such audiences), there are many far less effective scenes with big, broad invocations of social history. "Your songs are too safe. We got Dr King and the war," Stix tells Sparkle in a typically hamfisted exchange.

The film is mega-pastor producer T.D. Jakes's first secular production, and it's far easier to take than his wretched debut Not Easily Broken (2009), non-offensively preaching the values of hard work and clean living. The choppy pacing belies Akil's background in workmanlike 'urban' TV shows such as *The Game* but the music is terrific, handily trumping Dreamgirls with a mix of Curtis Mayfield tunes from the original and creditable R. Kelly Motown pastiches. §

Tristar Pictures

association with

a Debra Martin

AT.D. Jakes

production

Executive

Producers

Chase production

An Akil Productions

presents in

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Debra Martin Chase Curtis Wallace Mara Brock Akil Mara Brock Akil Story Joel Schumacher Howard Rosenman Director of Photography Anastas Michos Edited by Terilyn A. Shropshire Production Designer Gary Frutkoff Composed by Salaam Rem Production Mix Steve Morrow Costume Designer Ruth E. Carter

Whitney Houston Howard Rosenman Gaylyn Fraiche Avram Butch Kaplan Cast Jordin Sparks Snarkle Whitney Hou Emma Derek Luke @Stage 6 Films, Inc.

Mike Epps Satin Carmen Eiogo Tika Sumpter Omari Hardwick CeeLo Green **Curtis Armstrong** Larry Terrence J

Red Tamela Mann Ms Sara Waters Michael Beach Reverend Bryce

Dolby Digital/ Datasat Digital Sound/SDDS In Colour [2.35:1]

Sony Pictures

10.444 ft +8 frames

Detroit, 1968. Nineteen-year-old Sparkle Anderson writes songs which her 28-year-old sibling Sister sings at a nightclub. Sparkle, Sister and 24-year-old Dee live with their churchgoing mother Emma, whose own musical career failed. Impressed by Sister's sultry performance, aspiring music professional Stix convinces the sisters to form a girl group behind Emma's back. Sparkle and Stix begin dating. After a series of successful performances, Sister meets comedian Satin Struthers and marries him, angering her mother. The girls impress record executive Larry Robinson, who wants to sign them. However, when Sister shows up with a black eye because Satin has been abusing her, Robinson changes his mind. The sisters confront Satin and Dee kills him in selfdefence. Sister takes the blame and goes to jail. Dee wins a place at medical school. Robinson agrees to give Sparkle another chance. Acting as her manager. Stix negotiates a new contract at a successful solo performance, with a reconciled Emma in attendance.

St. George's Day

United Kingdom 2012 Director: Frank Harner Certificate 18 108m 41s

Reviewed by Thomas Dawson

At what point does affectionate pastiche become dim-witted parody? The directorial debut of Frank Harper, a British character actor specialising in hard-man roles, St George's Day combines a 'one last job' gangster yarn with football-hooligan histrionics. The film unfolds in a universe of "top boys", "little sorts" and "bent gabbers" (crooked cops). The 'heroes' here – middle-aged gangster cousins Micky Mannock (Harper himself) and Ray Collishaw (Craig Fairbrass) – run a criminal enterprise that's been handed down from their grandfather; according to veteran associate Trenchard (Charles Dance), they "make the Krays look like the Everly Brothers". Devoid of narrative credibility, suspense or even atmosphere, St George's Day possesses an almost camp sensibility, its butch characters delivering profane, sub-Tarantino banter.

This cinematically impoverished film is, however, ideologically interesting in terms of its retrograde vision of patriotic Englishness. The initial voiceover reminds viewers that "we remain a fighting nation who never yield" and the dialogue is peppered with references to Nelson, Churchill, Dunkirk, the D-Day landings and Helmand. And there is one laugh-out-loud line: apparently the problem with Micky, who's sleeping with a woman 20 years his junior, is his "Achilles cock". 6

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Nick Hamson Lars Sylvest Warren Derosa Steve Harvey Screenplay Frank Harper Urs Buehle Director of Photography Mike Southor Editor Nick McCahearty Production Designer Monica Black

Music Tim Atack Production Sound Mixer Nigel Albermaniche Costume Designer Jacky Levey

©St Geoges Day Ltd **Production Companies** Metrodome in association with

Elstree Studio Productions presents a Nick Hamson production A film by Frank Harper in association with Big Cat Films Executive **Producers** Sarah Weatherstone Chris Wood Roger Morris

Cast Frank Harper Micky Mannock **Craig Fairbrass** Vincent Regan Albert Ball Keeley Hazell Peckham Princess Luke Treadaway William Bishop

Steve Harvey

Ashley Walters Jamie Foreman

Neil Maskell Jimmy McCudden Charles Dance Trenchard Tony Denham Eddie Mannock Sean Pertwee Proctor Chucky Venn Zlatko Buric Vladimir Sukhov Nick Moran Richard **Dexter Fletcher** In Colour

[2.35:1] Metrodome

Distribution Ltd 9,781 ft +8 frames

When their business associates lose a shipment of cocaine with an estimated value of £50 million during a North Sea crossing, London gangsters Micky Mannock and Ray Collishaw face retribution from Russian gangster Vladimir Sukhov. Assisted by their colleague Albert, veteran fixer Trenchard and ex-Marine William, they travel to Amsterdam and plan a diamond heist in Berlin, to take place on 23 April - St George's Day - when the England football team will be playing against Germany in the city's Olympic Stadium. Despite being tailed by English and European police, Micky, Ray and their team successfully use the football-hooligan firm of Micky's older brother Eddie as a diversion. They steal the diamonds and escape abroad.

Stitches

Ireland/USA/Sweden 2012 Director: Conor McMahon Certificate 18 86m 12s



Red nose slay: Ross Noble

Reviewed by Bethany Rutter

When a film sets out to blend two genres as plainly as *Stitches* does (casting a stand-up comedian as an evil clown), it doubles its chances of slipping up. Fortunately, Conor McMahon's film manages the rare feat of being a comedy-horror that's both definitely funny and indisputably horrible, while always remaining gleefully silly.

The plot is simple: a clown, back from the dead, goes to the 16th birthday party of teenager Tommy to seek revenge on the children who accidentally killed him at Tommy's tenth birthday party. This is not a subtle film, but while you can often see the jokes or carnage coming, the payoff almost always exceeds expectation.

One of the most common stumbling blocks for any film about teenagers is the dialogue – it's not unusual to find yourself squirming with embarrassment at the way writers think young people talk – and yet here it's a strong point. Co-scripting with David O'Brien, McMahon creates a very lifelike world around his group of teens, who are archetypal but fun. In particular, Tommy Knight and Gemma-Leah Devereux are a real pleasure to watch as leads Tommy and Kate but all the supporting cast work with well-drawn characters – Kate's boyfriend rings hilariously true as a try-hard, middle-of-theroad, time-filling boyfriend of adolescence.

Masterful stand-up comedian Ross Noble does a sterling job as the titular clown, largely silent but adept at grasping the physical humour required for such a demented role, which makes his relatively straight face all the more menacing. The methods Stitches uses to exact his revenge on his former tormentors become increasingly ludicrous and are always accompanied by a deliciously corny one-liner that reminds us we're in true schlocky-horror territory while at the same time revelling in it. McMahon and O'Brien raise some serious laughs alongside the gore, creating funny dialogue, physical jokes, visual gags and moments where what you're seeing is so horrendous all you can do is chuckle in shock. Stitches isn't for the faint-hearted, and its 18 certificate is completely justified. It seems that no matter how comical or cartoonish the violence, there is still a stomach-churning reality to it. Nothing is off limits here – a particularly horrifying castration and scalpings that make *Inglourious Basterds* look gentle are among the grisly set-pieces.

Well structured and well paced, *Stitches* suits its slender running time of 85 minutes. It could perhaps have benefited from a little expansion of the supernatural elements surrounding the ritual that allows Stitches to rise from the dead but the silly plot knits together neatly enough and its narrow storyline leaves few holes to linger on. It's not a complex film by any means but it more than hits the markers of what it sets out to do. §

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
John McDonnell
Brendan McCarthy
Ruth Treacy
Julianne Forde
Written by
Conor McMahon
David O'Brien
Director of
Photography
Patrick Jordan
Edited by
Chris Gill
Conor McMahon
Production
Designer
Ferdia Murphy
Music
Paul McDonnell
Sound Designer
Steve Fanagan
Costume Designer
Allison Bwrme

©Fantastic Films/ Tailored Films Production Companies MPI Media Group, Bord Scannán na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board present a Fantastic Films/Tailored Films production in association with Solid Entertainment AB Developed in association with Bord Scannán na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board With the support of the MEDIA Programme-i2i Audiovisual of the European Union

Cast Ross Noble Richard Grindle 'Stitches' Tommy Knight Tom, 'Tommy' Shane Murray Corcoran Vinny

Gemma-Leah Devereu Kate Thommas Kane Byrne
Bulger
Eoghan McQuinn
Richie
Röisin Barron
Sarah
Hugh Mulhern
Paul
Tommy Cullen
Dan
Lorna Dempsey
Mary
Jemma Curran
Jenny
Ryan Burke
young Tom

Dolby Digital In Colour Distributor Kaleidoscope

Entertainment

7.758 ft +0 frames

Richard 'Stitches' Grindle is a lacklustre clown who performs at children's birthday parties and lives in a dilapidated caravan. At the birthday party of tenyear-old Tommy, the children are bored by Stitches's attempts to entertain them and start misbehaving, resulting in the grumpy clown being impaled on the knife used to cut the birthday cake. Six years later, Tommy still feels guilty at his part in Stitches's death; he suffers hallucinations and is plagued by anxiety. As his sixteenth birthday looms, he asks his closest friends round to keep him company on the day - but word spreads and soon a house party is under way, with the guests from Tommy's tenth birthday party in attendance. Stitches rises from the dead to exact his revenge, picking off his tormentors one by one. With the help of his best friend and Kate, the girl of his dreams, Tommy puts a stop to Stitches's rampage, though the clown's malevolent spirit lives on.

Taken 2

France/USA 2012 Director: Olivier Megaton Certificate 12A 90m 49s

Reviewed by Wally Hammond

It's hard to say if the cursory backstory provided in this lacklustre, mercifully short third collaboration between writer-producer Luc Besson and director Olivier Megaton, a sequel to the 2008 hit thriller *Taken*, is a presumption on the filmmakers' part or a token of the film's general air of half-heartedness.

It's tempting to read Taken 2's overall lack of commitment on the face of its star Liam Neeson, who imbues the characteristics with which his scriptwriters have issued his character Mills - fastidiousness, unreconstructed overprotectiveness and lethal acumen - with a weary, almost bored acceptance. Neeson is too good an actor to find himself aping the acting tropes of late-career Mel Gibson. This insouciance on his part – no precondition, it must be said, for the least lapse into self-reflexivity or humour in the movie – doesn't help to give any credibility to the Taken franchise's central conceit: the quasi-preposterous application of field-operative technical skills, suspensefully executed by a good old guy with a Hannibal Lecter-like intellect and Jackie Chan-style martial chops.

Istanbul is possibly unrivalled as an exotic setting (is Taken 2 the first movie to successfully exploit its sensational roofscapes?). But, although the film isn't explicitly racist, is it reasonable to assume the filmmakers completely overlooked the potency of its hijabgowned crowds as a xenophobic signifier? For director Megaton, his cinematographer Romain Lacourbas and his second units, this East-meets-West grand metropolis is chiefly of value, Bond-style, for the videogame navigability of its steep, cobbled alleyways, through which people and cars chase one another in scenes notable for their kineticism and length rather than any novelty, inventiveness or particular thrill or excitement.



Man in a hurry: Liam Neeson

Tempest

United Kingdom 2012
Directors: Anthony Fletcher, Rob Curry

As a postscript, it's interesting to note that in what might be called 'elderly action thrillers' – a revived genre of late – it seems necessary to augment the theme of re-empowerment of the ageing male hero with a subplot involving some sort of (often guilt-overcoming) reconnection with, or accommodation to, a lost or formerly neglected child, most commonly a daughter. The bizarre version offered here - between Mills and his daughter Kim and concentrating on Mills's obsessively jealous disapproval of Kim's boyfriend (Luke Grimes) - features Neeson adopting a homicidal glare unmatched since De Niro's Jack Byrnes in *Meet the Parents* (2000). At least he buys the poor boy an ice cream. 9

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Luc Besson Written by Luc Bessoi Robert Mark Kamen Director of Photography Romain Lacourbas Film Editors Camille Delamarre Vincent Tabaillon Production Designer Séhastien Inizan Original Score Nathaniel Mechaly Sound Stéphane Bucher Frederic Dubois Dean Humphreys Costume Designer Olivier Beriot **Fight** Choreography/ Stunt Co-ordinator Alain Figlarz

M6 Films, Grive

Productions

Production
Companies
Twentieth Century
Fox presents
a Europacorp,
M6 Films, Grive
Productions
co-production
With the
participation of Canal+, M6
and Ciné+
Made in association
with Dune
Entertainment

Cast
Liam Neeson
Bryan Mills
Maggie Grace
Kim
Famke Janssen
Lenore
Leland Orser
Sam
Jon Gries

D.B. Sweeney

Luke Grimes Jamie Rade Sherbedgia Murad Krasniqi Kevork Malikyan Inspector Durmaz Alan Figlarz Suko

Dolby Digital/ DTS/SDDS In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor 20th Century Fox International (UK)

8,173 ft +8 frames

Albania, the present. Gang boss and human trafficker Murad reviews a row of coffins on a hillside, including that of one of his sons, and vows revenge on Bryan Mills, the ex-CIA operative responsible for the deaths during his mission to recover his own daughter Kim from Murad's henchmen. Meanwhile, in California, Mills is attempting to tutor Kim for her third driving test. He suggests that Kim, together with her mother, his ex-wife Lenore, join him for a short holiday in Istanbul. Receiving information about Mills's whereabouts. Murad's men arrive in Istanbul: after a car chase and a fight, they capture Mills and Lenore and blindfold and manacle them in a basement: during the fight, Mills has managed to contact Kim on his mobile, advising her to hide. He contacts her again from the basement using a second mobile which he hid earlier on his person. He directs Kim towards the capture site by telling her details that he meticulously noted whilst he was being driven there: he also advises her on range-finding using the noise from exploding hand grenades. Mills saves his wife from asphyxiation. Using a handgun that Kim has dropped down an air vent, he kills his captors and escapes with Lenore. Kim's driving skills are tested to the full when she is forced into a high-speed car chase through Istanbul Old Town, finally crashlanding in the US embassy compound. Lenore is recaptured and taken to a Turkish bath, where Mills has a final showdown with Murad and his main lieutenant, killing both. Back in California, Kim passes her driving test and the family celebrate with ice cream.

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

The 17 London teenagers featured in this film must have felt a keener thrill than some of us when lines from *The Tempest* washed up as part of the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games, the material having become familiar to them through the making of this filmed workshop/performance. Here, as in Danny Boyle's extravaganza, The Tempest's musings on power, enslavement, isolation and assimilation form a grid that fits handily over the topography of modern Britain. It's not just the language - all those sounds, sweet airs and twangling instruments – that makes The Tempest such a convenient metaphorical vehicle. Its fluctuating master-and-servant roles and tone of worldly-wise acceptance can be angled to reinforce a broad range of positions, from nostalgic conservative to hand-wringing liberal do-gooder. Prospero and his drowned book might represent the jeopardised sanctity of human knowledge or the archaic concerns of the dead white European male, depending on how you look at them.

Wearying as it has become of late to see everything contextualised with reference to the Olympics, this film is powered by the same vague, non-ideological enthusiasm that characterised their official mode of address. Young people are blank slates of sheer potential, multiculturalism is but untapped bounty, social inclusion a question of personal determination. The implication that schools and local communities might not be duly prioritising the arts in education is evident but it's not polemic. Instead, we're just shown the obviously positive effect on this group of youngsters of a rigorous and accessible introduction to Shakespeare.

The film resists reality-TV luridness by keeping its subjects at a respectful distance, rather as if they're very famous people with carefully controlled PR. We get hints about their home lives but no heart-tugging detail; we see them interact socially but the filmmakers don't sniff out tensions or romances behind the scenes. The play's the thing, though it's only seen in discontinuous snatches and soliloquies, interspersed with rehearsal footage and the kids' earnest observations about the material.

To lend some element of drama, it somewhat behoves the film to construct state education as a gulag of hopelessness to which no one possessed of a familiarity with The Tempest would ever dream of abandoning a child. This, and the fact that the discovery of brains and talent lurking within such an institution is presented as a quasi-miracle, may rankle with any brave souls who've survived a state education, as pupil, parent or teacher. (Then again, perhaps I'm naive. In an age of crazed competition between middleclass parents for school places, it seems to have become acceptable to panic openly about your child being exposed to the shabby, the slow or the culturally other – so perhaps some viewers will be genuinely amazed that kids raised in what one of them calls "a concrete jungle" have abilities beyond binge drinking and online bullying.)

To be fair, however, Anthony Fletcher and Rob Curry's project isn't so much to congratulate the underprivileged on their latent potential as



Thames barriers: Zephryn Taitte

to emphasise gently the importance of a broad arts education to general development, and the capacity of the 'classics' to unlock empathy and awareness. There's an inevitable whiff of cultural paternalism about this position: we're encouraged to glow with approval as these little Calibans evolve towards the 'right' conclusions (the idea that *The Tempest* is "a commentary on the slave trade") or provide cute paraphrases of the action ("I get a bit ticked 'cos they're getting into this lovey-dovey moment..."). Still, the insights reached are no less valid for being familiar or naive; and while this is a very mild, non-confrontational take on both The Tempest and the British schooling system, only a hopeless snob would resist its inclusive, proart message. Fittingly though not surprisingly, the performers frequently outstrip trained actors in charisma and understanding alike. 9

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Anthony Fletcher
Rob Curry
Based on The
Tempest by William
Shakespeare
Directors of
Photography
Daniel Fazio
Richard Mitchell
Edited by
Francesco
Caradonna
Composer
Roi Erez
Sound Postproduction
Assaf Gidron
Animation
Jessica Ashman

©Fifth Column Films Production Company A Curry/Fletcher film Zephryn Taitte Paris Campbel Miranda Nathan Wharton Ferdinand Charlotte Gallagher Antonio Mitchell Bonsra Sehastian Jummi Bolabi Afra Morris Gonzalo Steph O'Driscoll Stephano

Kieran Edwards

Trinculo

Roy A. Weise

Emily Wallis

Chloe Reader Liz Francis Charlotte Russell Felina Tramonti Rosanna Mallinson Jennifer Twomey Maeve Burke

Caliban

In Colour

Distributor Fifth Column Films

Directors Rob Curry and Anthony Fletcher enlist a multiracial group of 17 young people from South London to workshop Shakespeare's 'Tempest'. During rehearsals, the teenage participants bemoan the negative attention of the police and the press. Their life experiences weave into their reading of the text as they tease out the play's post-colonial interpretations. Ariel is played by multiple actresses, who agree that they could now never countenance the part being played by a single performer. A variety of scenes are rehearsed and played out in sites around the Oval area of London.



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Home cinema



Hold the front page: Gene Evans and Mary Welch in newshound drama 'Park Row'

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

'Park Row' is Samuel Fuller's beer-soiled ode to press liberty, a fast, furious and unflinching celebration of journalists and journalism

PARK ROW

Samuel Fuller; USA 1952; Masters of Cinema/Region 2 DVD; 82 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: booklet, trailer

Reviewed by David Jenkins

A cursory scan through Samuel Fuller's lipsmacking 2002 memoir *A Third Face* reveals that he was a man who enjoyed putting the exclamation mark through its paces. In modern journalistic circles, the exclamation mark is something of a no-no – it's considered to be crude, it gives the impression of shouting. It's a notion that Fuller, the writer-director behind such films as *Fixed Bayonets!* (1951) and

Verboten! (1959), would surely have scoffed at. Fuller's movies are punctuated with the harsh precision of a hastily typed editorial from the stogie-clenching hand of a hardened New York hack. Scenes are orchestrated with short, pithy sentences, full of juicy detail and gaudy colour. And then, at the turn of a page, a monumental howl of chest-pounding emotion. Fuller's is a three-exclamation-mark cinema.

At the close of his scintillating, beer-soiled ode to press liberty *Park Row* (1952), as a kind of sweet gag, Fuller replaces the climactic title card which would ordinarily say 'The End' with one that reads 'Thirty'. It's a piece of antiquated newsroom lingo used by all honest-to-goodness newspapermen to alert the printers to the end of an article and is a clever, romantic touch that brings the viewer closer to Fuller's apparently earnest and adoring attitude towards journalists and journalism. Fuller had relished his time working as a tabloid crime reporter

before he enlisted in the army to fight in the World War II and Park Row chronicles the birth and (near) death of an independently financed newspaper, the Globe, and the spiralling circulation war it conducts with nearby rival the Star. But beneath the passion and vigour, there is a dark underbelly to Park Row, where the noble art of journalism is merely a conduit through which to probe the more cynical aspects of creativity, capital and unfettered machismo. It's not as unrelentingly bilious as, say, Billy Wilder's Ace in the Hole [1951] but the tone of unquestioning celebration is something of a subtle smokescreen.

Fuller might be deemed a cine-journalist and *Park Row* almost represents a kind of primordial ooze from which all the director's other work can be mapped. He had directed four films prior to *Park Row* and they all seemed to be the product of his former occupation rather than any kind of self-reflective examination of from

where his abilities as a teller of tales derived from. *The Baron of Arizona* (1950), about a master forger trying to gain unlawful ownership of Arizona, comes across as a stranger-than-fiction longread, while his superb *The Steel Helmet* (1951) is a piece of lurid, ground-level reportage.

Later films also riffed on issues and motifs first coined in *Park Row*: the crisp echo of Gene Evans's Phineas Mitchell – a man so sickened by the decrepit morals of polite society that he is moved to violently defend them – can be seen in Rod Steiger's Private O'Meara in Run of the Arrow (1957) and Robert Ryan's Sandy Dawson in House of Bamboo (1955). Retool the plot of Park Row as a delirious western and you've got Forty Guns (1957). Alongside 1957's China Gate, Park Row has been long unavailable on any home format, that is until, with little fanfare, MGM released it in the US as part of their burn-on-demand Limited Edition imprint in 2011. With this plush Masters of Cinema release, a gaping hole in the Fuller canon has been properly and lovingly plugged.

As detailed in A Third Face (in a chapter reprinted in Masters of Cinema's beautifully arranged booklet), Fuller felt that 20th Century Fox boss Darryl Zanuck owed him one after the success of his war thriller Fixed Bayonets!, and so the script for *Park Row* was duly handed to him. Zanuck loved it and had big ideas for it: a full-blooded newsroom saga with Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner plus grand musical interludes. Fuller respected Zanuck's zeal but this story was far too personal to allow his exacting vision to be tap-danced on by the executives. And so Fuller financed it himself, insisting that the lead be played by burly firebrand Gene Evans (his lead in The Steel Helmet) and that, because he was unable to shoot on location, he simply had to have huge sets built of the eponymous 19thcentury New York publishing hub which ran from the Brooklyn Bridge to the Bowery.

In many ways, it's a film that tells the story of its own production, its slender budget resulting in a dovetailing of form and content. Just as Phineas filches butcher's paper on which to print his beloved rag, there's also a thrilling seat-of-the-pants energy to the way the film is photographed, written and performed. The film has a near-hysterical immediacy, like it's being howled down the phone-line in an attempt to make it in time for the morning edition. The rat-a-tat dialogue is barked at a pace so furious it makes *His Girl Friday* look ponderous, while the fact that Fuller couldn't afford a zoom lens allows his camera to dive-bomb into buildings, through rooms and over cramped desk spaces.

During one of the lavish, high-angle dolly shots where Fuller tracks Phineas as he bounds down Park Row, we see the mussy silhouette of the Brooklyn Bridge painted on to the backdrop. A few scenes later, Phineas proudly holds up his first edition of the *Globe* and adorning the front page is a cartoon of old drinking pal Steve Brodie (George O'Hanlon), who managed to 'heroically' jump from the Brooklyn Bridge and survive. These two crude sketches of this cherished landmark make for an on-the-fly visual symmetry. Indeed, they look so similar that you could almost think Fuller was delicately manipulating the mise en scène so that it might coalesce more tightly with the journalistic theme: film as garish front-page splash.

Park Row claims in its short, gravely intoned prologue to be "dedicated to American"

The film has a near-hysterical immediacy... There's a thrilling seat-of-the-pants energy to the way it's written and performed

journalism", though the purportedly idealistic and ethically grounded Phineas appears only to fabricate stories for his newspaper. He chastises the *Star*, owned by silver-tongued society heiress Charity Hackett (Mary Welch), for rallying public opinion against an alleged murderer, leading to his death by hanging. Yet no sooner does he pledge his undying commitment to the forefathers of journalistic integrity – Horace Greeley, Joseph Pulitzer, Benjamin Franklin – than he's shopping Steve to the police so that the *Globe* can get the scoop on his triumphant release from 'the tombs'.

So Phineas's first big feature is nothing more than a devilishly orchestrated sham. He does the same thing later, twisting a story about government penny-pinching into a *Globe*-endorsed patriotic drive to get the Statue of Liberty a plinth. Perhaps it's a little presumptuous to read this as outright scorn but Fuller appears to be memorialising a very specific strand of tabloid journalism, one that goes beyond a simple public service and a cold regurgitation of facts and embraces lateral thinking, innovation and even imagination.

Through contemporary eyes, *Park Row* also offers a withering investigation into the dehumanising effects of market capitalism. Though Fuller flirts with the notion of a romantic entanglement, Phineas and Charity are first and foremost business rivals, and their actions are spurred less out of any dedication to serve their readers than the wish to trounce any and all competition. She sanctions physical attacks on his staff while he rakes muck on the *Star's* nefarious exploits. It's as if all the exhaustive explanatory detail about woodcuts, printer's devils and Linotypes (with a small role for Bela Kovacs as Ottmar Mergenthaler,

the actual inventor of the Linotype) comes to naught as Phineas channels his fervour into one inevitable goal: bringing down Charity's *Star*.

The mutton-chopped veteran reporter Josiah Davenport (Herbert Heyes) is the film's paragon of humility, the only character who appears able to view the trade unshackled by commercial concerns. It's Davenport who finds the stories and it's Phineas who packages them for a public supposedly ravenous for scandal. Giving some idea of what Fuller thought of the journalism game in the 1950s, he has the unreconstructedly old-school Davenport come to realise that he's an antique, that there's no longer any place for him in a savage environment driven more by emotion than dogged craft. And so he pens his own obituary before committing suicide. The ending, which sees a miraculous detente form between the *Globe* and the *Star*, is perhaps not as happy as it initially appears, the suggestion being that Phineas has learned nothing from his experiences and that the events of the film are likely to play out, ad infinitum, with other papers and other moguls.

Jonathan Rosenbaum has described Park Row as "a vest-pocket Citizen Kane"; while there are obvious similarities between the romantic hubris of Phineas Mitchell and Charles Foster Kane, there's also the overlapping (and prescient) suggestion that the allure of journalism isn't born from a desire to report the news but from the opportunity to control it. It's when allied to this idea that Fuller's thesis is at its clearest: Phineas may be corrupt, self-serving and quick to violence but that brand of journalism is ultimately the search for truth and its complex ethical machinery can't and won't allow past indiscretions to go unnoticed. But unlike the hypersensitive Kane, who spirals into depression and gloom, Phineas is a newspaperman for whom failure, greed and embarrassment are quickly suppressed. A loveable and debased American hero he may be but he knows that you can't let the barbs get stuck in your craw. It's doubtful that Phineas has his own Rosebud. Thirty. §



New releases

CASA DE LAVA

Pedro Costa; Portugal 1994; Second Run/Region 2 DVD; 105 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: Pedro Costa on 'Casa de Lava', director's scrapbook, interview with cinematographer Emmanuel Machuel, booklet with essay by Jonathan Rosenbaum

Reviewed by Chris Fujiwara

Construction worker Leão (Isaach De Bankolé), rendered comatose by an accident at his Lisbon workplace, is flown back to his native Cape Verdean island. Accompanying him is his determined young nurse Mariana (Inês de Medeiros), who finds it hard to ascertain Leão's relationships with the inhabitants. Among the latter are an elderly violinist and his large family, most of whom are preparing to embark for Lisbon in search of work, and a white woman (Edith Scob) who first came to the island when it was a Portuguese penal colony.

Originally conceived as a remake of Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), Pedro Costa's film stands at a lonely remove both from that inspiration and from the director's subsequent work – to which, however, *Casa de Lava* (his second film) serves as a bridge. Part narrative, part subversion of narrative (as Tourneur's work was), at times almost a documentary (but of what?), *Casa de Lava* is a marvellous and precise monument of inverted cinema, a bleakly elliptical puzzle made up of paths that go off every which way in relation to the camera and the ostensible storyline, which breaks off halfway through the film.

Mariana's own course – at first seemingly resolute, as Costa implies in his firm lateral tracking shot of her exploring her new environment - becomes obscure and contradictory as she criss-crosses the island, perhaps in search of the key to her own sexuality (every bit as much a theme of the film as her patient's predicament), perhaps trying to avoid it. Like its heroine, the film itself is in a state of perpetual transition. Through the obscurities of the narrative, it becomes clear that the tragedy of Casa de Lava is figured in an endless oscillation between places (Cape Verde and Portugal) that has frozen into a state of permanent exile for all the characters. Disc: Second Run's DVD contains, in addition to a stunning remastering that shows off the film in all its dry visual splendour, an elegant and personal English-language introduction by Costa, an interview with cinematographer Emmanuel Machuel (who discusses the importance of cinematic rhythm) and the scrapbook Costa made while preparing the film, rendered here as a series of still images. The booklet is devoted mainly to an excellent text by Jonathan Rosenbaum, who aptly describes Casa de Lava as "a suite of denials" and examines it in relation to I Walked with a Zombie.

CRIME DOES NOT PAY: THE COMPLETE SHORTS COLLECTION (1935-1947)

Various directors; USA 1935-47/Warner Archive; Region 0 DVD; 540 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

With the ascent of Joseph I. Breen to the czardom of the Production Code

Administration, the Hays Code of 1930 finally became the enforced law of Hollywood in the summer of 1934. Only a month later, Public Enemy Number One John Dillinger was gunned down outside Chicago's Biograph Theater, having just watched Clark Gable walk to the electric chair in *Manhattan Melodrama*. The phrase "crime does not pay" appears nowhere in the Hays doctrine but it's between the lines: Hollywood had to stop making lawbreaking look so *appealing*. Just as the Dillingers would no longer be tolerated on the street, so tragic gangsters of the *Manhattan Melodrama* sort would no longer be tolerated on screen.

It was in this atmosphere that MGM began producing its 'Crime Does Not Pay' two-reelers, all 49 of which have been packaged together in this six-DVD set by the Warner Archive Collection (along with bonus short Eyes of the Navy). Once nearly impossible to see, these punchy shorts offer a valuable historical perspective on the collective propaganda push by Franklin D. Roosevelt, J. Edgar Hoover and Louis B. Mayer to persuade Americans of the value of the rule of law while providing compulsively watchable viewing pleasure.

Produced between 1935 and 1947, the 'Crime Does Not Pay' shorts spanned the gap between the decline of the gangster film and the postwar rise of *film noir*. They were sufficiently popular to lend their name to a spin-off radio series, a newspaper strip and a long-running comic book which was a forerunner to 1950s horror comics' macabre morality tales.

That last point of reference is important, for in the ledgers of 'Crime Does Not Pay', as in the EC Comics universe, every transgression must duly be paid back in kind. Each episode begins in a cardboard office set, with the 'MGM Crime Reporter' introducing a frontline veteran of the war for law and order - an assistant DA, a forensic scientist, a pickpocket-squad detective – who in turn opens up a tale of crime and punishment (this inelegant framing device is refined as the series progresses). A typical story begins with a criminal enterprise in the early stages of operation, setting up shop in a new town. Big earnings quickly follow, along with innocent collateral damage: ptomaine poisoning from hijacked beef, worksite calamity from shoddy construction etc. Sometimes the casualties aren't merely impersonal, as time and again it's shown that even white-collar criminals will stop at absolutely nothing to protect their profit margin or cover their tracks. In Give Till It Hurts, for instance, a pair



Cape crusader: 'Casa de Lava'

of confidence tricksters, siphoning funds from a children's hospital pledge drive, think nothing of giving the order to pull the plug on a little girl's iron lung to save some dough.

During their rise to power and profit, the bad guys pause only to exude hubris ("No dumb cop is gonna get me, I'm too smart for 'em") and it's around this point that the investigating party is introduced – a mob of interchangeable middle-aged Anglo-Saxon/Celtic bit players with nicotine-stained moustaches and itchylooking suits who, using vintage ratiocination and deputised civilians, steadily build a case against the guilty party. The main investigator is usually cornered upon catching up with his culprits, in grave danger until the cavalry arrives and someone – usually the triggerman directly responsible for the earlier killing starts a firefight. The crooks shoot first, the cops shoot straight; the bullet fired by the punk in the first reel boomerangs into him in the second as the proverbial chickens come home to roost. In The Luckiest Guy in the World, the series's last entry, stylishly directed by frequent contributor Joseph M. Newman, a wife-killer who's seemingly got away scot-free is felled by a stray bullet in a wholly unrelated incident – proof that karmic imbalance will be redressed even when law enforcement fails.

If the template is fixed, the style with which it is executed is not. Noteworthy names showing early promise here include Jacques Tourneur (*Think It Over*), Fred Zinnemann (*Help Wanted*), Joseph Losey (*A Gun in His Hand*) and ultra-prolific B-director Edward L. Cahn, who handles many of the better entries, including *Plan for Destruction*, which details the crime of the century, the Nazi takeover, abetted by law-and-order propaganda at its most toxic. **Discs:** The threat of "5 Years in Federal Prison" for piracy at the beginning of every disc is, aptly, the only thing approaching a bonus.

DYING ROOM ONLY

Philip Leacock; USA/1973; Warner Archive/ Region 1 DVD; 74 minutes; Aspect Ratio 4:3

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

Cult author and screenwriter Richard Matheson was in the middle of a 25-year hot streak when he adapted his variation on the classic Paris Exposition story for the small screen. Cloris Leachman and Dabney Coleman star as a couple who become separated after stopping at a remote roadside café. As with many a Matheson protagonist before her, Leachman finds her grip on sanity slipping as she tries to discover what's happened to her vanished husband. The rogues' gallery of suspects includes Ross Martin's surly cook, Ned Beatty's bar layabout, Dana Elcar's seemingly friendly sheriff and (best of all) Louise Latham's fragile motel manager (her role is the main addition to the original 1953 short story).

Though it shares the same basic premise as Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), Terence Fisher's *So Long at the Fair* (1950) and Joseph M. Newman's *Dangerous Crossing* (1953), the classic woman-in-jeopardy plot is here distilled to its most basic elements. As in Matheson's better-known companion piece *Duel*

Revival

NAUGHTY BUT NICE

Savvy, socially ambitious and sexually confident, Gainsborough's splendidly amoral seductresses struck a chord with wartime women

THREE WICKED MELODRAMAS FROM GAINSBOROUGH PICTURES

The Man in Grey/Madonna of the

Seven Moons/The Wicked Lady

Leslie Arliss; UK 1943/45/45; Criterion Eclipse/Region 1 DVD; 116/110/104 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

Reviewed by Graham Fuller

Celebrating "sexually expressive women" in the 1978 book *Women in Film Noir*, Janey Place observed: "The dark woman of *film noir* had something her innocent sister lacked: access to her own sexuality (and thus to men's) and the power that this access unlocked." The British equivalent of the *femmes fatales* of the classic American *noir* period were not the Googie Witherses and Jean Simmonses of indigenous *noirs* but the highly sexed anti-heroines of the lurid melodramas made by Gainsborough Pictures in the mid-1940s. Margaret Lockwood's splendidly amoral seductresses made her the country's dominant woman star.

Of the ten key melodramas the company made during this successful period, seven fall under the 'Gainsborough Gothic' rubric coined by Francis Wyndham. The cream of the crop – Leslie Arliss's The Man in Grey (1943), Arthur Crabtree's Madonna of the Seven Moons (1945) and Arliss's box-office sensation *The* Wicked Lady (1945) – are now being released in a Criterion Eclipse set, perhaps to do better on DVD in the US than they did theatrically. One suspects that Anthony Asquith's Fanny by Gaslight (1945), Crabtree's Caravan (1946) and Bernard Knowles's The Magic Bow (1946) and Jassy (1947), which concluded the otherwise black-and-white cycle in Technicolor, won't be forthcoming because they pale in comparison.

None of the Criterion three are gothic in the Ann Radcliffe or Universal Pictures sense of the word. *The Man in Grey* is a sadistic Regency romp about female friendship betrayed; *Madonna of the Seven Moons* is an early 20th-century Italian farrago (by way of Mayfair and Soho) in which a respectable married woman with dual-personality disorder goes slumming with thieves; and in *The Wicked Lady*, a 17th-century noblewoman turns to highway robbery because her stuffy husband and domestic routine bore her.

Based on novels by women, the films are characterised by florid acting (which, like the dialogue, makes little concession to period) by revolving stars Lockwood, James Mason, Phyllis Calvert, Stewart Granger and Patricia Roc; lavishly baroque settings; fabulous costumes; rapid pacing; fluid if unobtrusive camerawork;



Power play: Margaret Lockwood and James Mason in 'The Wicked Lady'

and atmospheric lighting (which borders on the expressionistic in *The Wicked Lady*).

The Gainsborough melodramas uniquely demonstrated, through their visions of a fantasised past, a consciousness of the changed status and attitudes of women in wartime. With so many husbands and boyfriends overseas, and so many women deployed in occupations that showed they were men's equals, traditional roles were breaking down, allowing women greater sexual and social mobility. In *The Wicked Lady*, Lockwood's lusty Barbara Skelton proves more than a match on the road (and in the grass) for highwayman Jerry Jackson (Mason), whose desire for her seals his downfall.

These were lush romances targeted at women, who made up the greater proportion of the audience. Mason, cruel and saturnine, and Granger, cocky and charming, tended to make their entrances late, whetting the appetites of their female fans. And although Lockwood and Roc's décolletages in *The Wicked Lady*—which caused American censors to request reshoots—suggest that the male directors had male viewers in mind, the advertising of female sexuality, redolent of its power over men, was probably more for the benefit of machinists, land girls, WAAFs and other women wearing sexless overalls and uniforms.

Given the uncertainties of wartime, more women were initiating affairs than in the past. Lockwood, whose characters were as sexually

In the world of Gainsborough Gothic, a woman seeking thrills and advancement doesn't have time to mess about predatory as they were socially ambitious, steals the men attached to the good girls played by Calvert in *The Man in Grey* and Roc in *The Wicked Lady*. In the former, the remark by Calvert's Clarissa that she doesn't want to be married the night after losing her virginity to Mason's bull-like lord prepares the ground for Lockwood's Hesther, a promiscuous gold-digging actress, to usurp her place.

In Madonna of the Seven Moons, Calvert is more fulfilled as the sexy consort of a Florentine robber than as the tame bourgeois housewife she is in her other life; her daughter (Roc) changes from a worldly modern teenager into a prim miss who suffers in comparison with her liberated mother – the message being that mums, too, could enjoy their sexuality. Since conventional morality was tacitly understood to be irrelevant (for propriety it's restored in the films' closing minutes), and since it's sexual women who are shown taking what they want, the filmmakers clearly anticipated where audience sympathies would lay.

Often dismissed as tosh, these movies set a clear pre-feminist agenda. The men can only resort to violence. "Did anyone tell you what a slut you are?" Granger's Rokeby says to Hesther in *The Man in Grey* – she doesn't deny it – before slapping her, but he then abandons Clarissa, allowing Hesther to murder her. In The Wicked Lady, Jackson rapes Barbara – and she kills him. In that film's wittiest sequence, Barbara, having poisoned the old servant (Felix Aylmer) who knew of her crimes but tried to lead her to God, impatiently waits for him to die before doing him in with a pillow. In the world of Gainsborough Gothic, a woman seeking thrills and advancement doesn't have time to mess about. 9

New releases

(1971), the distinctive mélange of paranoia and sole-survivor chronicle sees the protagonist become completely isolated from her surroundings, reduced to a primal state in a true fight for survival.

An underrated suspenser, *Dying Room Only* was subsequently spliced with *Duel* and remade (without credit) by Jonathan Mostow as *Breakdown* (1997), with Kurt Russell trying to track down his missing wife after a confrontation with a trucker. **Disc:** This release is utterly spartan in terms of extras but has it where it counts with a highly impressive progressive transfer.

HELL IS A CITY

Val Guest; UK 1959; StudioCanal/Region 2 DVD; Certificate PG; 92 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1 anamorphic; Features: alternative ending

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Veteran British genre-hopper Val Guest alighted on the police procedural at the turn of the 1960s, making two excellent examples in quick succession, both influenced far more by hardbitten US *noir* than the cosier UK equivalents. Sadly, the Brighton-set *Jigsaw* (1962) is still awaiting revival but *Hell Is a City* wears its half-century well.

On the face of it, this could hardly be more familiar territory, with Stanley Baker's archetypally world-weary Inspector Harry Martineau seeking to settle old scores when classmate-turned-criminal Don Starling (John Crawford) goes on the run, committing murder in the process. But a strong supporting cast (Maxine Audley, Donald Pleasence, Billie Whitelaw, Warren Mitchell) serves up a fair bit more than a bald synopsis might suggest, as does the pervasively keen eye for contemporary detail and what was then a much less fashionable willingness to blur the moral distinction between cops and crooks: on more than one occasion, Martineau is visibly tempted by alternatives to his unsatisfactory home life.

Although the film is slightly let down by some overly pat dramatic contrivances (as soon as an attractive young woman is established as a deaf-mute, it's clear that she'll play a significant role in the climax) and a dearth of authentic regional accents (the Welsh Baker and the American Crawford don't even try to convince as former Mancunian schoolkids), the location work is superb, with Arthur Grant's black-and-white Scope cinematography making the most of tightly policed urban spaces and lawless windswept moors alike. In particular, a scene with an illegal pitch-and-toss open-air gambling ring has a genuinely documentary feel.

Guest doesn't hold back on the requisite action set pieces but the suspense high point comes when the triangle between the seedy bookie Hawkins (Pleasence), his much younger trophy wife Chloe (Whitelaw) and her old flame Starling is brought into sharp relief after she agrees to hide Starling in the attic and has to cover for him while being quizzed by her understandably suspicious husband.

Disc: Aside from the StudioCanal branding and redesigned menus, this is essentially a reissue of Cinema Club's 2005 DVD, which boasted



Infernal affairs: 'Hell Is a City'

an excellent transfer (whose source print is so clean it's a shame a Blu-ray wasn't considered) but lacked the commentary that Guest recorded for Anchor Bay in the US. The sole extra is an alternative, more upbeat ending, which brings some closure to Martineau's marital difficulties.

ISN'T ANYONE ALIVE?

Ishii Gakuryu; Japan 2011; Third Window Films/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 113 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Reviewed by Tony Rayns

The artist formerly known as Ishii Sogo (he announced last year that he was changing his personal name to Gakuryu, which means 'Mountain Dragon') has always had a thing for the apocalyptic. This oddball indie movie, adapted from a play by Maeda Shiro and shot on the university campus where Ishii now teaches, offers a pocket-apocalypse which plays rather like a riposte to Lars von Trier's *Melancholia*. Instead of being rooted in one woman's debilitating mental problems, disaster here springs from a barrage of trivial/

absurd/dysfunctional human relationships although there are dark rumours that it may have something to do with secret US Army experiments in a campus lab deep underground. Whichever, 18 young people caught up in familial or sexual tangles suddenly choke up and die, victims of a disease which is engulfing the globe; as the last of them pops off, a plane and birds in the background start plummeting from the sky. Early scenes of bickering are cut with a manic speed which is no doubt deliberately irritating, but things slow down as the deaths kick in and the ending is selfconsciously elegiac. The cast, including such well-known indie stars as Murakami Jun and Takahashi Mai, often seems uncomfortable with the black-comedy tone, and Ishii's own touch is noticeably less convincing than it was in his classics *Angel Dust* and *August in the Water*. **Disc:** A sharp transfer, although there are a few issues of subtitle legibility. No extras on the review disc.

KORCZAK

Andrzej Wajda; Poland 1990; Kino Classics/ Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 115 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: trailer, stills

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Trailing one of the 20th century's greatest filmmaking careers behind him, Andrzej Wajda is not, in toto, an easy artist to pigeonhole. His 40-plus films have varied stylistically, tangled with varying degrees of rage with Poland's post-war political messes and aimed at ambivalent themes – hardly a recipe for auteurist neatness. Wajda has always made films like a battlefield doctor takes pulses, whether exploring the messy present or the scars of the past, reaching for the disarming



Lawrence of Arabia For all the epic battle scenes – the blowing up of trains, the march on Aqaba – it's often the intimate moments that register the most

detail and conjuring unpredictable rhythms, and if the story of Holocaust saint Henryk Goldszmit (famous all over Poland as a radio personality and as the children's author Janusz Korczak) is a vital thread in Polish 20th-century history, than Wajda owns it.

Coming three years before *Schindler's List*, which thieved an entire palette of visual schema, *Korczak* returns once again to the streets of Warsaw 1939-40, for decades Wajda's ground zero, and experiences the harrowing daily collapse of Polish-Jewish life under the Occupation from the perspective of the eponymous doctor-hero, whose only priority is his orphanage of 200 Jewish children. Wajda studies this fiercely holy man as a cultural anomaly, a fiery and passionately devoted non-compromiser who refuses even to wear a Star of David armband, smack in the middle of the most thoroughly compromised historical place and time conceivable.

Of course, from where we sit now we know that Korczak's trajectory will be brief and tragic, that his righteous nobility stands no chance of surviving, and Wajda captures this drama in majestic visual depth (Robby Müller's pearl-and-ebony cinematography is breathtaking) but with a dry-eyed sobriety. As Korczak, veteran thesp Wojciech Pszoniak is properly indignant, humane and appalled, imbuing the man with a gravity that amply suggests how much his dedication to his charges defines and emboldens him. Wajda is not afraid of idealising Korczak, and as the march to the Treblinka train is slow and steady and filled with children of all ages, the film in effect dares us to believe that such a selfless and pure-hearted hero existed (he routinely turns down opportunities to save himself). But Korczak freely accompanied his orphans to the camps and died there with them, and the tale backlights like few others the complete darkness represented by the Nazis – crystal-clear goodness was swallowed up with every other human quality and there was nothing to be done about it. The film about the most defiant and heroic Pole of the WWII years leaves behind a devastating sense of hopelessness, of watching evil easily win, on a cosmic scale if only for the time being. **Disc:** The amazing Blu-ray images are papercut sharp and beautifully unsettling.

LADY SNOWBLOOD/LADY SNOWBLOOD 2: LOVE SONG OF VENGEANCE

Fujita Toshiya; Japan 1973/74; Arrow Films/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate 18; 97/89 minutes (92/85 on DVD); Aspect Ratio 2.35:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: video appreciation ('Slicing Through the Snow'), booklet, trailers

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Towards the end of Kill Bill Vol1 (2003), a haunting song in Japanese obligingly confirmed already strong suspicions, based on its vengeance-driven narrative, elegant widescreen cinematography and recurring visual motif of blood spraying in a fashion more like a lawn sprinkler than anything biologically plausible, that Quentin Tarantino



Femme fatale: 'Lady Snowblood'

was more than a little familiar with Fujita Toshiya's quasi-feminist revenge melodramas from 30 years earlier. Still, there's much that he didn't borrow, starting with a detailed period setting that, counting flashbacks, spans the bulk of the Meiji era (1868-1912) and draws extensively on the historical events of the time, when Japan started to open up to foreign influences after centuries of near-isolation.

The climax of the first film in this Arrow Films set takes place at a decadent European-style masked ball, its villain tugging down Japanese and American flags as he breathes (and spurts) his last; the second is set shortly after the successful prosecution of the 1904 Russo-Japanese war and shows the early germination of nationalist seeds that would sprout into full-blown hubristic imperialism over the next four decades.

Born in a women's prison and orphaned at birth, the protagonist Yuki (Kaji Meiko) is initially charged with hunting down and killing the vicious gangster quartet (three male, one female) who murdered her father and enslaved her mother. In the second film, she's a much more politically motivated assassin, working in turn for the government (through blackmail) and a motley band of anarchist subversives. The first film is more singlemindedly gripping than the more thematically ambitious but dramatically convoluted sequel, but each has enough stylish (if logistically implausible) swordplay-driven set pieces to keep genre fans happy. Fujita and screenwriters Uemara Kazuo and Koike Kazuo also play postmodern games with their material via the reporter Ryurei (Kurasawa Toshio) who turns Yuki's life story into a proto-manga newspaper comic strip, 'Lady Snowblood', in an attempt to entrap one of her targets. Discs: Initially released on lacklustre non-anamorphic DVDs by Artsmagic (UK) then given substantially better but still standard-definition transfers by AnimEigo (US), the third time proves the charm. Here, the source prints are all but flawless, and if the Blu-ray transfers aren't quite as pin-sharp as the current technical state of the art, this may well reflect the Tohoscope originals and their comparatively limited budgets. There's nothing to complain about otherwise. Japanese cinema experts Jasper Sharp (video appreciation) and Tom Mes (booklet essay) provide useful context.

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

David Lean; UK 1962; Sony/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate 12; 224 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.20:1; Features: 'Secrets of Arabia: A Picture-in-Graphic Track,' 'Peter O'Toole Revisits Lawrence of Arabia', 'The Making of Lawrence of Arabia', 'A Conversation with Steven Spielberg', 'The Camels Are Cast,' In Search of Lawrence,' Romance of Arabia', newsreel footage of the New York premiere, advertising campaigns

Reviewed by Geoffrey Macnab

The 50th-anniversary Blu-ray release of David Lean's epic comes in a spanking 4K digital restoration from Sony, doing full justice to Freddie Young's astonishing cinematography and Lean's extraordinary use of colour and desert landscape. Nonetheless, this remains a film that demands to be seen on the big screen (it's being rereleased in UK cinemas on 16 November) – even the most sophisticated home-cinema system still won't come close to replicating the experience of watching it projected in a big auditorium on 70mm.

Lean's stock seems to have fallen in recent years – Lawrence of Arabia came in at only 81 in the recent *Sight & Sound* critics' poll, none of his other films even made the top 100 and he wasn't in the top 25 directors either. Perhaps, though, if the restored Lawrence had been available earlier, he would have featured more prominently. It's too easy to dismiss Lean in his Sam Spiegel years as a purveyor of empty widescreen spectacle, for Lawrence has a thematic richness that defies such a superficial categorisation. For all the epic battle scenes – the blowing up of trains and the march on Agaba – it's the intimate moments that often register the most strongly: Peter O'Toole's Lawrence in his goggles riding down English country lanes on the motorbike that kills him, or alone in the desert.

The film also captures the ambivalence (often coming close to downright hostility) with which the British establishment regarded him. Lawrence stirred up unsettling feelings about race, class and sexuality. "Did he really deserve a place in here?" British dignitaries ask during the memorial service for him in St Paul's Cathedral. It's a question cinephiles have in recent times asked about Lean's epic and the canon, and one that this spectacular new restoration should help to answer beyond question. **Discs**: As you would expect, the Blu-ray edition comes packed with extras reflecting on T.E. Lawrence's enigmatic personality and that of David Lean too. These include Laurent Bouzereau's 2000 film The Making of Lawrence of Arabia, which is full of anecdote and information. We hear production designer John Box explain how he painted in the sand for the famous scene in which Omar Sharif appears on the shimmering horizon, while editor Anne Coates provides intriguing asides about how Lean steeped himself in French nouvelle vague cinema during post-production. The actors reflect on the perils of riding camels and costume designer Phyllis Dalton explains the lengths she went to in making sure that O'Toole's British army uniform fit him badly and looked crumpled (as opposed to his Arab robes, which suited him perfectly). There is also a 'picture in graphic track' which allows you to watch the

Rediscovery

END OF THE DREAM

One of the braver but lesserknown films of the American New Wave, 'End of the Road' takes an unforgiving look at the collapse of 1960s idealism

END OF THE ROAD

Aram Avakian; USA 1970; Warner Home Video/Region 1 DVD; MPAA Rating R; 110 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 anamorphic (DVD widescreen); Features: trailer, 'An Amazing Time: A Conversation About End of the Road'

Reviewed by Lee Hill

Rarely seen since its release in 1970, End of the Road boldly evokes the moment in 1968 when the decade's idealism began to collapse under the weight of too much reality. The film was the directorial debut of Aram Avakian, who had earned a reputation as the editor of Arthur Penn's The Miracle Worker (1962) and Mickey One, (1965), Robert Rossen's Lilith (1964), Francis Coppola's You're a Big Boy Now (1966) and Bert Stern's Jazz on a Summer's Day (1959). After a rocky start (he was fired as director from the Lassie clone Lad: A Dog and the sports biopic Paper Lion), Avakian and friend Terry Southern, the cult writer behind Dr. Strangelove (1964), Candy (1968) and Easy Rider (1969), raised a small budget from Allied Artists to shoot End of the Road in rural New England in the summer and autumn of that event-battered year.

Working from John Barth's 1958 novel, Avakian and Southern turn the book's existential character study into a cri de coeur for the collapse of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. Humanities graduate Jacob Horner (Stacy Keach) is found in a nearcatatonic state by Doctor D (James Earl Jones) on a railway platform. D takes Horner to his Remobilisation Farm, where he is treated with a therapeutic regime - three parts Wilhelm Reich, one part Dale Carnegie. Horner then moves to a college town to teach remedial English. He befriends an older professor, Joe Morgan (Harris Yulin), and his wife Rennie (Dorothy Tristan). Despite D's advice to avoid complications, Horner begins a doomed affair with Rennie.

Reeling from the Tet Offensive, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, strikes and protests across Europe and the increasing standoff between the counterculture and the Silent Majority which reached its extreme in the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Avakian and Southern used the adaptation to exorcise the turmoil around them. In an audacious opening montage, edited to Billie Holliday's 'Don't Worry 'Bout Me', Horner's breakdown is intercut with newsreel footage and photographs of America's post-war prosperity - suburbs, consumer goods, the space race. These images are juxtaposed with footage showing urban violence, civil-rights strife, growing slums and fighting in Vietnam.

not just the bad faith of their middle-class protagonists but also the radical alternatives offered by Doctor D. This unforgiving pursuit of a greater truth is heightened by elliptical editing, hyper-naturalistic cinematography by Gordon Willis (a debut that would be followed by the heights of *The Godfather, Klute* and *Annie Hall*) and an elegant soundtrack supervised by Avakian's brother George, who produced Miles Davis, Dave Brubeck and other jazz icons.

While there are moments when the film's ambitious Brechtian strategies falter, *End of the Road* is never let down by the performances. Keach gives Horner, a cipher on the page, a mix of charm and mischief; Jones's Doctor D is every charismatic '60s guru – Arthur Janov mixed with Eldridge Cleaver – wrapped in one; Yulin brings an icy charisma to Joe Morgan's career academic; and Tristan, in her first acting role, is revelatory, bringing warmth and dignity to a woman who becomes the casualty of the self-absorption of the men around her.

Ironically, a laudatory *Life* magazine feature on the eve of *End of the Road*'s release became the catalyst for its neglect. Critics like Judith Crist and Pauline Kael deeply resented being

Critics like Judith Crist and Pauline Kael resented being told what the next 'Easy Rider' might be and panned the film

told what the next *Easy Rider* might be and panned the film. Barth thought the adaptation was "vulgar". The film received an X rating, due in part to its harrowing abortion scene, which led many newspapers to refuse ads. Young audiences were enthusiastic but the film's cult status never achieved the momentum of, say, *Performance* or *El Topo*.

Yet the film has echoed in the oddest places. Francis Coppola quotes its final shot in *The Godfather Part II* (1974) and Nicolas Roeg references it in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), though Steven Soderbergh has perhaps been its biggest champion: he mirrored its experimentalism in *Schizopolis* (1996), *Full Frontal* (2002) and *The Girlfriend Experience* (2009), and directed *Amazing Time*, a documentary about the film that is included in the extras on Warner's new DVD release.

The story of the American New Wave of the 1960s and 1970s has typically focused on Scorsese, Spielberg, Coppola, Ashby and the few other directors mythologised in Peter Biskind's 1998 book *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*. However, the growing awareness of films such as Monte Hellman's *Two-Lane Blacktop* (1971) and Barbara Loden's *Wanda* (1970) is slowly pointing to the lesser-known but arguably braver paths taken in that halcyon period. The reissue of *End of the Road* further extends that counter-history at a time when much of America is even more divided and uncertain about the future than it was in 1968.



From that sequence, Avakian/Southern question | Shock therapy: James Earl Jones and Stacey Keach in 'End of the Road'

New releases



movie while reading very detailed textual background information.

OEDIPUS REX

Pier Paolo Pasolini; Italy 1967; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 104/100 minutes; Certificate 15; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: trailer, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

In the archive pieces reproduced in the booklet accompanying this release, Pasolini makes it clear that he regards his fifth feature as at least as much a work of auto-psychoanalysis as an adaptation of Sophocles's tragedy. Which partly explains the 20th-century bookends, the first seemingly set between the wars (Pasolini was born in 1922, and presumably regarded 1967 as the mid-point of his own life), the second in the then present, with the rest of the film ostensibly taking place in ancient Corinth and Thebes. The casting further underscores Pasolini's thesis: Franco Citti was best known at the time as the pimp Accattone in the director's 1961 film debut, and his Oedipus is similarly marred by cock-of-the-walk arrogance - he's a man incapable of grasping the import of one of the most famous prophecies in western culture until it's far too late. As Pasolini explained at the time, he's felled by a fatal combination of innocence and anti-intellectualism which nonetheless makes him all too recognisably human. Silvana Mangano is the mother in both ancient and modern episodes, her inscrutability offsetting her son/lover's primal brutishness.

Despite some considerable departures from the usual approaches favoured by Sophocles adaptations, the film sticks closely to the original text, turning its soliloquies into unsettlingly silent intertitles and using Moroccan locations and Romanian folk music (decades before it became a world-music fashion accessory) to convey a vivid sense of a barely civilised world in which symbolic achievements carry as much weight as actual ones.

Disc: The Blu-ray transfer is outstanding, its almost tactile sense of texture extending to resolving small defects in the paper on which the credits and intertitles are printed. The soundtrack is occasionally a bit rough but this may well reflect the original. The typically generous booklet is an all-Pasolini affair, consisting of an interview and essay about the film (both usefully self-critical) and a bilingual presentation of his 1962 poem 'Prayer to My Mother'.

PURSUED

Raoul Walsh; USA 1947; Olive Films/Region 1 NTSC Blu-ray; 101 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: introduction by Martin Scorsese

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

One of the most challenging cases of auteurism and yet one that is universally accepted by now, Raoul Walsh was so much the man'sman, no-bullshit craftsman, with such a long filmography full of incidental films, that he runs the risk today of being uncanonised and neglected. It may well be folly searching for a set of characteristic tropes or neurotic obsessions in his best work; rather, we should



Complex tale: 'Oedipus Rex'

consider Walsh a man who is not revealed by his movies but sublimated to them. Unerringly wise about behaviour and narrative, Walsh never sought to imprint his intelligence on a film but instead aimed at making his stories as sturdy, speedy and affecting as they could be. His best films, including *Pursued*, are essential simply because of the balance Walsh effortlessly attains between human frailties (doubt, weakness, woe) and the pulpy, fastmoving exigencies of popular Hollywood.

Many of his films, from *The Big Trail* (1930) to High Sierra (1941), White Heat (1949) and beyond, pioneered fresh genre paradigms. Pursued is arguably the first modernist western, structured around an oedipal crisis and hidden memories, shot with a noir's darkling dread and crafted so that all the characters, not just Robert Mitchum's traumatised everyman, range wildly across their personal ethical spectrums. Mitchum's Jeb is holed up in the ruins of his childhood house waiting for a lynch mob to arrive, and struggles to remember the cascade of events that brought him there – from his mysterious orphaning as a child and adoption by secretive prairie mom Judith Anderson to his maturation and rivalry with stepbrother Adam (a disarming John Rodney), his dawning love for stepsister Teresa Wright and his undecipherable kinship with Dean Jagger's



Family guy: 'Pursued'

malevolent one-armed frontier politico, who has been quietly plotting to kill Jeb since he was a boy. But why? The questions, posed in a remarkably complicated screenplay by Wright's husband Niven Busch, are more naturally provocative than the answers, but in the meantime the story twists the central family in knots, and even Mitchum's relaxed stolidness has moments of frazzled tension.

Breaking of new ground as a western full of psychological ambiguity and moral mystery, *Pursued* opened the door for the genre's major works to come, from Anthony Mann's 1950s dramas to *High Noon* (1952) and The Searchers (1956). Shot by James Wong Howe with some of the sky-darkening tricks beloved of Kalatozov collaborator Sergei Urusevsky, Walsh's is a magnificent and brisk yarn, overplayed in occasional moments of Hitchcockian energy but mostly serenely Walshian - that is, invested in the story and not interested in wasting your time. **Disc:** As with all of Olive Films' releases from the Paramount vaults, a beautiful fresh stamp made from an optimal archive print. The three-minute Scorsese intro, shot for an earlier edition following the film's 1990s restoration, is to the point and relatively tepid.

PUZZLE OF A DOWNFALL CHILD

Jerry Schatzberg; US 1970; Carlotta/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 104 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: 'Le Film révélé', interview with Pierre Rissient, 'Illusion et réalité', Michel Ciment interviews Jerry Schatzberg, French reissue trailer

Reviewed by David Thompson

Jerry Schatzberg, who received considerable acclaim for *The Panic in Needle Park* (1971) and the Cannes Grand Prix-winning *Scarecrow* (1973), has generally enjoyed more support from the French than from his fellow Americans, and *Puzzle of a Downfall Child*, his first film, was given (prior to this edition on disc) a well-publicised theatrical rerelease last year in France by the enterprising distributor Carlotta Films.

Based in New York, Schatzberg was an extremely well-established fashion photographer and past 40 when he made the shift into directing features with this ambitious exploration of a charismatic model undergoing a severe mental breakdown. Based on the experiences of a real-life model Schatzberg knew, Anne St Marie (credited as 'technical consultant'), the film begins with her fictional counterpart, Lou Andreas Sand (an obvious nod to the infamous Lou Andreas-Salome, psychoanalyst and lover of Rilke and Nietzsche), living as a recluse in a remote beach house. There she is visited by photographer Aaron Reinhardt (Barry Primus), a former close friend and briefly her lover, who wants to record her memories with the aim of making a film – his first – about her life. The fact that the script, structured as a wayward sequence of flashbacks, was inspired by audiotapes made by St Marie, that this was to be Schatzberg's debut in cinema, that it is very atmospherically shot (by cinematographer Adam Holender, then hot from Midnight Cowboy), and that the director cast in the central role Faye

New releases

Dunaway, with whom he was then, as they say, romantically linked, points to how far this is the classic semi-autobiographical first feature – a mini-genre in itself.

As Schatzberg reveals in the candid interview on this disc, the screenplay by Adrien Joyce - the pseudonym for Carole Eastman, of *Five* Easy Pieces fame – was directly drawn from his ideas and St Marie's tapes and the portrait of the fashion world, from bitchy agents to rude photographers to louche art directors, derives from his own experiences. On the whole, the film functions more convincingly as an intimate depiction of this brittle, fraught milieu than as a deep exploration of a woman's sexual problems. But it's also evident – and Schatzberg doesn't deny it – that the reason Lou's neurotic, often exasperatingly insecure nature is so brilliantly realised in Dunaway's performance is because the character derives in part from the actress's own volatile personality. It certainly makes the film an often raw and uncomfortable watch.

The 'puzzle' of the title refers not only to the fragmentary, slippery nature of Schatzberg's flashback structure, which plays feverishly with the unreliability of Sand's memories, but also to the film's frequent stylistic debt to the phantasmagorical European cinema of Fellini and Bergman, with Juliet of the Spirits (1965) and Persona (1966) being the obvious reference points. Hence perhaps the general rejection of the film in the director's homeland and its appreciation and championing by those redoubtable auteur-hunters Pierre Rissient and Michel Ciment, neither of whom is backward here in underlining their part in aiding Schatzberg's career. But then we're told by the director that even the late Andrew Sarris eventually apologised in person to him for previously misjudging the quality of his work. **Disc:** A beautiful transfer, emphasising the effective use of natural light so crucial to much late-1960s/early-1970s cinema. French subtitles are optional on the film. The interview with Schatzberg is in his native tongue but there are no English subtitles for Rissient.

DAS TESTAMENT DES DR MABUSE

Fritz Lang; Germany 1933; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/ Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate 12; 120 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.19:1; Features: commentary by David Kalat, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Fritz Lang's first two thrillers about the metaphorically tentacular crime lord Doctor Mabuse almost perfectly bookend the Weimar era, with the post-WWI pre-hyperinflation Dr Mabuse the Gambler (1922) given this sequel a decade later. Not that its production year is especially obvious on screen besides a few written references to 1932, since the film goes on to anticipate entire genres (1940s noir, 1950s sci-fi/horror, the latter through the ghostly visitation of a bug-eyed, brain-bared Mabuse), the industrial landscapes of Eraserhead (the extraordinarily modern-looking cat-andmouse opening is set to a relentless barrage of mechanical noise) and Videodrome's positing of a man whose 'testament' offers such a wealth of



Lang shot: 'Das Testament des Dr Mabuse'

textual and recorded evidence of his existence that it scarcely matters that he's dead. While Lang delivers everything a thriller fan could plausibly want (a car chase, a siege-driven shootout, a race-against-time escape from a booby-trapped room, a mysterious message scratched in glass, an assassination subtly revealed by the victim's car refusing to move when the lights change, a jigsaw narrative whose pieces gradually slot satisfyingly into place), he also plays countless formal games which retain their visual and thematic sophistication 80 years and countless rip-offs later. Rudolf Klein-Rogge, so visually imposing as Mabuse in the earlier film, is barely seen here despite his star billing - but that's one of Lang's masterstrokes: these fleeting glimpses create the impression that Mabuse is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. Small wonder the Nazis banned the film, ostensibly on the grounds that "the presentation of criminal acts committed against human society is so detailed and fascinating that it might well lead to similar attacks against lives and property, and terrorist actions against the state". In other words, it reeked of subversion from first frame to last, and remains all the more exhilarating for it. **Disc:** The best-looking transfer in Masters of Cinema's Dr Mabuse DVD box was an obvious candidate for a Blu-ray upgrade, and although allowances have to be made for advancing years, it generally looks terrific, the original picture grain both ample and digitally unimpeded. As for extras, David Kalat's outstanding commentary (an absolute model of the form) has been ported over from the earlier DVD but the booklet has been beefed up considerably, adding archive pieces by Lotte Eisner, a 1962 Lang interview and a reminiscence by cinematographer Fritz Arno Wagner to Michel Chion's original essay.

TETSUO: THE IRON MAN/ TETSUO II: BODY HAMMER

Tsukamoto Shinya; Japan 1989/92; Third Window Films/ Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 18; 67/83 minutes; Features: short film 'The Adventures of Electric Rod Boy,' Tsukamoto interview, multiple trailers

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Despite being shot in black-and-white 16mm on all but non-existent funds, Tsukamoto Shinya's cyberpunk feature debut remains one of the most pulverisingly effective sci-fi horror films of the past quarter of a century. Any pretensions towards narrative coherence



Metal guru: 'Tetsuo: The Iron Man'

are swiftly abandoned in favour of a celluloid manifestation of delirium tremens at its most pathologically extreme, and for every idea that's galumphingly Freudian (Taguchi Tomoroh's newly constituted metal-machineman assaulting his understandably horrified yet weirdly mesmerised girlfriend with his rotating-drill penis), there are half a dozen that seem drawn straight from the kind of nightmares that defy rational interpretation comparisons with Cronenberg and Svankmajer are certainly valid but don't tell anything like the whole story. The ramshackle Heath Robinson approach may have been budgetdictated but it works brilliantly: the stopmotion effects give the fusion of bared wires and exposed ganglia an unnervingly vivid physicality (this stuff hurts!) and the frenzied cutting is so fast that the rough edges are barely noticeable and certainly don't matter.

In seeking to follow it up convincingly, Tsukamoto set himself one hell of a challenge and Body Hammer doesn't quite pull it off - though billed as a sequel, it's more of a revisiting of similar themes, with a similarly anonymous salaryman (Taguchi again) mutating into another metal-monster through the power of sheer rage at the thugs who kidnap and murder his child. Colour (mainly blue-tinged metal and orange flames), 35mm and a much bigger budget add production value, but, although Tsukamoto tries hard to maintain the same unhinged energy, it feels oddly sedate (by comparison if not by any normal yardstick), the apocalyptic tone lightened by a greater propensity towards black farce. **Discs:** The films are released as double bills in separate Blu-ray and DVD packages. The Tsukamoto-approved transfers come across exceptionally well on Blu-ray: thankfully, no attempt has been made to hide the copious grain that's an indelible part of the first film's visual texture. The mono soundtracks are equally untouched but the volume can now be turned right up for maximum impact without fear of distortion. Tsukamoto himself contributes a couple of articulate interviews about his early work while the 45-minute Super 8 film The Adventures of Electric Rod Boy (1987) is a clear dry-run for Tetsuo, using many of the same ideas, effects and physical props. The title notwithstanding, this is emphatically not a jolly kids' romp, unless the kids are already on some kind of register.

WINGS

William A. Wellman; USA 1927; Paramount/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 144 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: 'Wings: Grandeur in the Sky,' Restoring the Power and Beauty of Wings; 'Dogfight!' documentary

Reviewed by David Thompson

Wings earned its place in cinema history as the recipient of the very first Academy Award for Best Picture (or as it was then, Most Outstanding Production), the last silent film to be given such an accolade until *The Artist* this year. Seeing Wings today, it's hard not to feel that it represents an astounding level of achievement in Hollywood production before sound crashed in and introduced a new ponderousness to the screen.

In 1927, Paramount – then the biggest studio in operation – was looking for a 'roadshow' movie to put everyone else to shame. The story of the flying aces of World War I came from airman John Monk Sanders, whose reputation helped to obtain vital support from Washington, guaranteeing the full resources of the US armed forces. The film was shot at the vast San Antonio base in the Texan desert, which also became the location for war-torn France and provided a huge cast of soldiers and airmen.

What made Wings stand out as a cinematic experience was undoubtedly the huge investment in the film by its director, 'Wild Bill' Wellman, a former flyer who was determined that the aerial sequences would be totally authentic. One of the huge pleasures of the film today is realising that nothing on the screen is created by a computer: all the stunts were genuinely perilous (with only two accidents reported), cameras were mounted on planes, and shooting was only undertaken when the clouds were at the right density.

The storyline follows two young Americans who take up flying to fight the Germans over France, with the conflict reaching its climax in the Battle of Saint-Mihiel in 1918, brilliantly staged by Wellman. As two then unknowns were cast in the lead roles (Richard Arlen and Charles 'Buddy' Rogers, who had never actually flown a plane before), a love element had to be introduced. Paramount's leading female star Clara Bow was given prominent billing, with a protracted scene of drunken revelry in Paris (during which, amazingly, Bow is briefly seen topless) added to break up the action sequences.

But for all Bow's vivacious presence,
Wellman characteristically plays up the
real love interest of the film happening
between Rogers and Arlen with a famous
climactic kiss that still seems shocking for
its time. Star-to-be spotters will find there
is an extremely brief role for one Gary Cooper,
whose screen magnetism brought him
immediate fame. But ultimately the true
stars of *Wings* remain the planes as they
dive, duck, spin, crash and soar in an
unsurpassed ballet of the skies.

Disc: Paramount has pulled out all the stops
for this beautiful restoration, cleaning up
the images, adding authentic tinting and

reproducing the Handschiegl colour process

for flame effects. The powerful orchestral



A Woman Under the Influence Cassavetes's masterpiece of mental breakdown and marital disharmony gives off a palpable feminist charge

score similarly follows extant music sheets; more controversial is the addition of sound effects, especially of plane engines and gunfire, that, though replicating what was provided on some original prints and undoubtedly thrilling, could be construed as a mite overdone and anachronistic. An organ soundtrack is provided as an alternative.

A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE

John Cassavetes; USA 1974; BFI/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate 15; 147 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: interviews with Peter Falk and with Cassavetes assistant Elaine Kagan, original trailer, alternative trailer, essay booklet

Reviewed by Kate Stables

"We were unaware of Women's Lib," confesses Peter Falk in the extras to the BFI's new release of A Woman Under the Influence, discussing the wave of female empathy for the film's heroine that he and John Cassavetes discovered when they toured it. Yet Cassavetes's grainy, grabby masterpiece of mental breakdown and marital disharmony gives off a palpable feminist charge. It seeps insistently through LA housewife Mabel's hollow domestic routine, her husband Nick's violent insistence on 'normality' and the suburban unease of friends and family at her frantic, increasingly freewheeling manner. Despite Cassavetes's overwhelming directorial interest in character and performance, you can't watch Mabel's fragility and eccentric playfulness reduce Nick's construction-work colleagues to shuffling silence over spaghetti without sensing that she's a woman out of her time as well as out of her mind.

The breakdown itself makes compelling use of a kind of flamboyant realism, with Gena

Rowlands's bravura performance unravelling Mabel in cries and whispers, from a disjointed one-night stand to a school pick-up where she is unnervingly more childlike than her offspring. Her alternately fierce and frail portrayal, with its darting verbal tangents, was widely assumed to be improvised – yet Falk assures us that even that searing breakdown scene was scripted by Cassavetes. Indeed, Rowlands's Oscar nomination may have obscured how very good Falk's own performance is. Although at the time he was at the height of his fame as genial television detective Columbo (as the film's original trailer wasn't above flogging), his Nick is a risktaking portrait of a complex, conflicted man, an ambivalent mix of tender and terrifying. Dragging his kids to enforced 'fun' on the beach after their mother has been committed or swearing a stuttering love for Mabel so intense that he'd "lay down on the railway tracks for ya", Falk creates an acute portrait of a man hidebound by his emotional inarticulacy.

Miscommunication between loved ones was a constant theme for Cassavetes – in the flailing relationships of *Faces*, in *Minnie and Moskowitz*'s odd couple and in the solipsistic siblings in *Love Streams* – but here it finds perhaps its most eloquent expression. **Disc:** A super-sympathetic Blu-ray transfer gives an enviable, nostalgically grainy texture to this BFI release and cleans up the soundtrack enough for clarity without sacrificing authenticity. While the content of the accompanying booklet (particularly Tom Charity's essay) is well done, the extras package is significantly less hefty than the Criterion DVD release.

Television

HATFIELDS & MCCOYS

Sony Pictures Entertainment; USA 2012; Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 290 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: 'making of' documentary, music video

Reviewed by Tom Charity

A ratings winner for the History Channel (each of its three parts drew more than 13 million viewers in the US), this miniseries, based on the real-life Hatfield-McCoy feud, probably counts as the most successful Hollywood western since *True Grit*. Kevin Costner stars as Anse Hatfield, a West Virginia farmer who earns the bitter enmity of his Kentucky neighbour Randall McCoy (Bill Paxton) when he quits on the Confederate cause some months before the official end of the Civil War. McCoy's sense of injustice festers into an allout feud that takes in both clans and claims one life after another over a six-year period.

Writer Ted Mann was a screenwriter-producer on *Deadwood*, but this is an altogether less baroque affair, a grim, historically accurate, relentlessly downbeat chronicle of Appalachian pride and fury running amok. Costner – who might just qualify as the last of the cowboy stars – has acquired a pleasingly grizzled quality in his fifties which makes you hope that he finds his own Bud Boetticher. Perhaps his old *Waterworld* buddy Kevin Reynolds, who directs here, will step up.

The series has scope and beauty (Romania standing in for Appalachia), and some choice supporting performances from the likes of an almost unrecognisably uncouth Tom Berenger and Andrew Howard as the aptly named bounty hunter Bad Frank Phillips. The tit-for-tat vengeance does become repetitive over the span of 290 minutes and the saga lacks the cantankerous humour and poetry that distinguished the Emmy-winning 1989 miniseries *Lonesome Dove*, adapted from Larry McMurtry's novel, but Reynolds introduces a gothic black comic element which lifts the climax into an altogether more mordant realm. **Discs:** A 'making of' documentary is included.

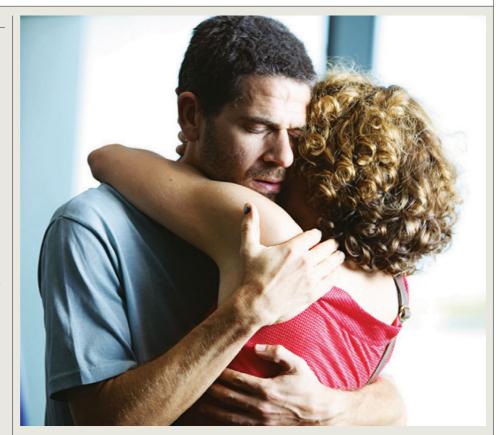
PRISONERS OF WAR

Keshet Media/Channel 2/Sky Arts; Israel 2009; Arrow/ Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 493 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

In 1991, during a secret mission in Lebanon, three Israeli Defence Force reservists are incarcerated and savagely tortured. After 17 years, a controversial political exchange is made and the men are brought back to their loved ones — or what is left of them, anyway.

Written and directed by Gideon Raff, this ten-part serial (originally broadcast as *Hatufim*, 'abductees' in Hebrew) is an intelligent and imaginative reworking of Tennyson's 'Enoch Arden'. Interwoven with the familiar theme of the sailor's long-delayed return are a variety of literary and cultural emblems, survivor's guilt unpredictably rubbing shoulders with Homer's *Odyssey* and such Cold War thrillers as Algis Budrys's *Who?* and Richard Condon's *The Manchurian Candidate.* What makes this take stand out, though, is the balancing effect of having much of the story seen through the eyes of the wife, fiancée and sister the soldiers



Prisoners of War Though remade in Hollywood as 'Homeland', the original is a horse of a very different colour and one from a much superior bloodline

left behind. One has a son and daughter who barely know who their father was and resent his intrusion into their life (the daughter's only question is whether he was raped in prison); another is a social pariah after marrying the brother of her then fiancée. The most curious yet affecting 'return' involves the sister of the third soldier who, after being told that he died mysteriously in captivity before the exchange, slips into a fantasy to commune with him daily.

Slowly and inexorably, the serial tightens the screws on its increasingly frazzled characters ("There is no logic, only pain") to reveal the secrets behind the survival of the two kidnapped men and the failed return of the third. While generally eschewing easy answers, Raff caps it all with a massive twist in its closing moments to leave viewers both sated and gasping to know what happens next (a second series is due). Though technically remade in Hollywood as *Homeland*, the original is a horse of a very different colour (there is no equivalent of the Claire Danes character, for instance) and one from a much superior bloodline. **Disc:** There are no extras but the anamorphic transfer is well up to par.

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION - SEASON 1

Paramount; USA 1987-88; Paramount Home Entertainment/ Region ABC Blu-ray; 1,184 minutes; Certificate 12; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: 'The Beginning,' Selected Crew Analysis', 'The Making of a Legend', 'Energized!' and 'Memorable Missions' featurettes, bloopers, episode promos

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

This sequel managed to do what no US science-fiction TV series had ever managed to do before – run beyond a fourth year. Ironically, though, it also took that long for this iteration to really find its feet.

This debut season relies to a dismaying degree on themes and situations borrowed from the original Star Trek, often just remaking older episodes (the most notorious being the one in which Data, an android with a Pinocchio complex, beds the accident-prone chief of security). But what in the 1960s seemed naive and even charming in its espousal of a utopian ideology born out of the Kennedy administration dream of Camelot now merely serves to exclude any genuine conflict from the interactions of the regular cast of characters. The best episodes, although ironically set in the past, are often those taking place in the virtual-reality holodeck – a gimmick that would soon wear out its welcome through overuse. **Discs:** The *raison d'être* here is the superb new HD transfer taken from the original 35mm elements, yielding rich colours and high levels of detail. There are two hours of backslapping 'making of' documentaries – although only writer David Gerrold provides a hint of the much publicised behind-the-scenes tumult. 9



STUDYING **EALING STUDIOS**

By Stephanie Muir, Auteur Publishing, 144pp, paperback, £8.99, ISBN 9781906733315 Ealing is one of the best loved and best known of all British cinema institutions. It has become a brand name representing a particular kind of studio practice, a community of filmmakers working together in a defined location, producing a particular kind of film; acclaimed and universally loved examples include The Lavender Hill Mob. Whisky Galore!, Dead of Night, The Ladykillers and Kind Hearts and Coronets. In Studying Ealing Studios, Stephanie Muir places Ealing both in the broad context of British cinema and within the context of a nation having to adjust to a devastating conflict, the consequences of its aftermath and the social upheavals that followed.

www.auteur.co.uk

THE HOLLYWOOD **FAMILY FILM**

A History, from Shirley **Temple to Harry Potter**

By Noel Brown, I.B. Tauris, 288pp, paperback, £17.99, ISBN 9781780762708 This book is the first in-depth history of the Hollywood family film, tracing its development from its beginnings in the 1930s to its global box-office dominance today. Drawing on multiple sources, and with close analysis of a broad range of films - from such classics as Little Women, Meet Me in St. Louis, King Kong and Mary Poppins to such modern family blockbusters as Star Wars, the Indiana Jones films and Toy Story this timely book underlines the immense cultural and commercial importance of this neglected genre.

www.ibtauris.com

FRAMING FILM

Cinema and the Visual Arts

Edited by Steven Allen & Laura Hubner, Intellect, 176pp, paperback, illustrated, £19.95 ISBN 9781841505077 Framing Film is a vivid and engaging book that explores the intricate relationship between cinema and visual arts. This fascinating and thought-provoking volume considers films and artworks from both high- and lowbrow culture, including posters, graphic novels, painting, photography and production design. From the feature adaptation of Watchmen to artwork inspired by The Shining to the representation of art and artists in cinema, Framing Film explores the flow of inspiration and influence from the art world to film and vice versa. This is an indispensable addition to any film-lover's library.

www.intellectbooks.com

of the Cut

THE CRAFT OF THE CUT

By Marios Chirtou & Mark Riley, Wiley, 380pp, paperback, £27.99, ISBN 9781119951735 Learn the art of professional editing from two experts in a package that combines teaching with an authentic professional experience to guide you through a typical industry production workflow. You'll have access to raw footage from a professional short film; you'll make your own edit decisions; and ultimately you'll complete your unique version of the film. The enclosed DVD contains all the rushes of Pranks, created by filmmakers Marios Chirtou and Mark Riley.

With more than 20 years' experience in the TV industry, Chirtou and Riley provide the on-thejob experience you need to break into the world of professional video editing.

www.wiley.com

THE HOBBITS

The Many Lives of Bilbo, Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin

By Lynnette Porter, I.B. Tauris, 288pp, paperback, £12.99, ISBN 9781845118563 The beloved characters Bilbo, Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin have been much adapted for radio, television, film and stage. Lynette Porter follows the hobbits through these many other lives, from Tolkien's on-page revisions and John Boorman's unmade screenplays through to Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings film trilogy and its musical counterpart. Journeying through fanzines, videogames, fan fiction and more, Porter demonstrates how the hobbits, their characters and their stories continue to introduce audiences to Tolkien's work, in new and adapted forms.

www.ibtauris.com



Well travelled: the international terrorist played by Edgar Ramirez in 'Carlos' shares something of the cosmopolitanism of its director, Olivier Assayas

A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

OLIVIER ASSAYAS

Edited by Kent Jones, Austrian Film Museum/ Synema Publications, 256pp, £20.50, ISBN 9783901644436

A POST-MAY ADOLESCENCE:

Letter to Alice Debord

By Olivier Assayas, translated by Adrian Martin and Rachel Zerner, Austrian Film Museum/Synema Publications, 104pp, £12.50, ISBN 9783901644443

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

Olivier Assayas was 13 years old in 1968, and in his memoir describes observing the events of May first from the periphery – of Paris, of adolescence – and in retrospect with

longing, as what had seemed to portend the "shaking apart" of "the State, the order, but also the Stalinist orthodoxy" degenerated into "heaviness and dogmatism", and worse. Larry Gross titles his contribution to Kent Jones's collection 'After Art Cinema', dating its demise to around 1980; and Jones himself quotes his friend Assayas as saying that his generation lacked cinematic parentage, since the "Nouvelle Vague considered themselves as children and didn't want to be fathers." But Assayas grew out of his youthful nostalgia. "To say that I arrived in the *aftermath* is meaningless," he writes. "We are always in the *before* and the *after*, time does not set in a succession of freeze-frames."

Exposure to the publications of the Situationist International in the mid-1970s, after its disbandment, led him to discover that the "shuddering sense, unforgettable, of a pedestal on which everything is trembling" — which he had felt in 1968, perhaps made all the more potent by his absence from the barricades — could be recuperated (as it were) in the present. A Post-May Adolescence, written in the early 2000s, is the story of that

discovery; and although Assayas scarcely mentions films at all, his Situationist-inspired conviction that "the mapped and labelled world still remains to be re-explored and above all reinvented" – arrived at before he ever picked up a camera – animates his best work. Yet he also realised that the Situationists' idea that art would be "superceded" by revolutionary action "denied something in me that would be impossible for me to renounce".

Both Assayas's L'Eau froide (1994), an anecdote from the shooting of which concludes the book, and his new film Something in the Air (Après mai) draw directly on the years recounted in A Post-May Adolescence, but the intellectual epiphanies and anxieties evoked in the book also find their way into Carlos (2010), in sometimes complex and surprising ways. The term "petit-bourgeois" – used by communists, as Assayas puts it, "to disqualify all revolt or individual thought as attempts to muddy the waters" – is used by Carlos in his first scene against the soixante-huitard students from whom he wants to distinguish himself; yet Assayas also remembers feeling a residual "instinctive sympathy" for his

kind's commitment to action, evident in the film when Carlos condemns the pointlessness of picketing and petitions – and is himself called "petit-bourgeois" for seeking personal glory.

Assayas's notion of the historical experience (which comes up in a discussion of Situationism's punk afterlife) as "new events, lacking precedents to which we might directly refer in order to guide our behaviour, that force us to apprehend them for ourselves" encapsulates the epoch-spanning sensibility of *Carlos*, but also the elliptical manner of Late August, Early September (Fin août, début septembre, 1998) and Summer Hours (L'Heure d'été, 2008), as well as the disruptive demonlover (2002). Whether they arrived 'after' art cinema, belong to it or presage something else, they are some of the most vital films of recent decades and it is extraordinary to learn - from the Austrian Film Musem's Alexander Horwath in the preface – that Jones's book is not only the first of its kind in English, but that "were it in French, it would also be the first of its kind".

Jones's introductory essay hints that an explanation for this neglect may be found, at least in Anglophone criticism, in Assayas's uneasy relationship with hegemonic post-Cahiers du cinéma cinephilia: his films are rarely allusive in the Godardian mode, despite his former career as a Cahiers critic. (While a volume of his criticism was published in France in 2009, it remains untranslated.) As Jones notes, though Assayas's nouvelle vague predecessors were unwilling to assume their paternal duties, Assayas's father had been a screenwriter "associated with the 'tradition of quality' defined by François Truffaut in his notorious invective 'Une certaine tendance dans le cinéma français". In fact, the pages of A Post-May Adolescence that Assayas devotes to his parents are among the book's most fascinating.

Jacques Rémy – the name his father used because it was "simpler and less Jewish" than Rémy Assayas, "a minor but non-negligible benefit in 1930s France" - was born in the Ottoman cosmopolis of Salonika, grew up in Milan under Mussolini and arrived in Paris, a committed communist, as Max Ophuls's assistant. He spent World War II in Latin America, where he met Victor Serge, the exiled Russian revolutionary, who "fostered a precocious evolution of my father's view regarding the Soviet regime's true nature", as Assayas fils delicately phrases it. Mother Catherine was Hungarian, and, having fled Budapest in 1946, needed no such prompt. Assayas says that none of this matters, since adolescence "predisposes one to contradict" one's parents, but his appalled recollection of friends discussing "the significance or lack thereof" of The Gulag Archipelago suggests that he's joking.

Gross calls Assayas "one of the great contemporary film artists of globalization", and it is hard not to see foretokened in this early-20th-century family background the cultural fluency of his very 21st-century films. More directly, it was through a Milanese cousin that Assayas ("bilingual from an early age") came to spend undisclosed portions of the 1970s in London, where he found in the counterculture "something of the political program I had felt as central to May '68, and had found nowhere formulated", the first Velvet Underground album and "a geography on the scale of the



Extended family: Olivier Assayas's 'Summer Hours'

entire planet, bounded by the Orient on one side and the West Coast of the United States on the other". In France he had sold copies of an ultra-left journal called, wonderfully, *Tout! Ce que nous voulons: Tout* ("All of it! What we want: All of it"); in London he sold copies of the underground magazines *Oz* and *IT*.

Although A Post-May Adolescence is subtitled "Letter to Alice Debord" (the widow of Situationist Guy) and pivots on Assayas's encounter with Situationism, he also pays tribute to George Orwell, whose four-volume Essays, Journalism and Letters – another of his London discoveries, little known in France at the time – he calls his "intellectual keystone". Interestingly, the teenage Assayas's image of Orwell, not only an essayist but a man of action "in step with the movement of history", resembles the man Assayas's Carlos imagines himself to be. Jeff Reichert, in his contribution to Jones's book, refers to L'Enfant de l'hiver (1989), Late August... and Summer Hours as "decennial seasonal films", somewhat autobiographical "dispatches"; I hope Assayas takes a similar approach to his autobiography proper.

Assayas pays tribute to George Orwell, whose 'Essays, Journalism and Letters' he calls his "intellectual keystone"



Olivier Assayas

As befits a first approach, Jones's collection is a conscientious film-by-film overview backed by a clutch of interviews with key collaborators, filmography and multilingual bibliography. There is also an annotated list of "Ten Films" from Assayas himself (different from his recent S&S poll list). The challenge Jones throws down before his all-American team is to pin down Assavas's camera style, "an elusive quality that is difficult to describe or even name". Michael Koresky, writing on *Une nouvelle vie* (1993), and Richard Suchenski, on Les Destinées sentimentales (2000), turn to the metaphor of brushstrokes, appropriately given Assayas's background as a painter; Jones himself is particularly acute on the filmmaker's handling of time, "in which the magnitude of an event is neither felt nor fully processed at the moment it occurs, but in the ripples and aftershocks that follow across the years".

B. Kite, who takes on *demonlover*, provides the collection's outstanding piece, a self-declared "exercise in ambivalence" that is for much of its length a close reading of Fritz Lang's Mabuse films, the first of which, Dr Mabuse, *The Gambler*(1922), he takes as the ur-thriller. The original Dr Mabuse, says Kite, is "able to game the system because he understands the arbitrariness of the rules". A decade later, in The Testament of Dr Mabuse (1933), Mabuse himself has receded into the shadows and "the movie itself seems a sort of artificial intelligence that's been set up to process a certain set of data". By the hour of demonlover, "there's no longer a face to be found at the center of the maze" and Mabuse "is now the dominant system itself". Which isn't to say that Kite, queasy about the film's "apparent desire to be at once indigestible and seductive", likes it much any more.

Published by the Austrian Film Museum, previously responsible for a 2009 volume on Apichatpong Weerasethakul, *Olivier Assayas* is a notably well-produced book. Apart from its abundance of colour stills, there are gleanings from the Assayas archive, including a letter he faxed to Edward Yang – one of the Taiwanese directors Assayas was early to champion in his time at *Cahiers* – during the writing of *Irma Vep* (1996).

NICHOLAS RAY

The Glorious Failure of an American Director

By Patrick McGilligan, It Books, 576pp, paperback, \$25, ISBN 9780060731380

Reviewed by Paul Mayersberg

Patrick McGilligan's biography is meticulously researched, like his book on Fritz Lang, and as critically acute as his book on Hitchcock. He calls his subject "a kind of human jigsaw puzzle, the pieces of his mystery scattered and lost over time". Where Bernard Eisenschitz's superb 1996 biography *Nicholas Ray: An American Journey* went from the films to the man, McGilligan goes from the man to his films.

Nicholas Ray is best remembered now by most filmgoers (as opposed to cinephiles) for Rebel Without a Cause (1955) - and that through the legend of James Dean. In a Lonely Place (1950) has a serious place in the film noir canon for its disenchanted view of Hollywood and the legend of its star Humphrey Bogart, in his most disturbing role. The rest of Ray's oeuvre – which includes such near-masterpieces as They Live by Night (1949), The Lusty Men (1952), Johnny Guitar (1954), Bigger Than Life (1956) and Bitter Victory (1957) – owes its clandestine reputation entirely to the opinions of the critics and filmmakers-to-be of Cahiers du cinéma. Jean-Luc Godard's review of Bitter Victory stated with definitive simplicity: "The cinema is Nicholas Ray." Godard didn't even bother to describe the story, implying perhaps that aesthetically the film was Ray himself. Similarly, McGilligan's book says that Ray's films can't fully be understood without knowing the events and pattern of the director's life.

Here in the UK in the early 1960s, Movie magazine (of which I was an editor) produced a Nicholas Ray issue in 1963 apropos the release of 55 Days at Peking. At that time Sight & Sound, which represented conventional film opinion, was baffled by our view of Ray as one of the most important filmmakers anywhere, seeing him instead as an intermittently talented Hollywood director. At the time *S&S* commissioned a rather desperate article entitled 'Ray or Ray? (Satyajit or Nicholas?)' to enforce the view that it was ridiculous to put the Hollywood director in anything like the same league as the Bengali master. The 'case' of Nicholas Ray became a test ground for the auteur theory, which asserted that a popular film vehicle was fully capable of personal expression in the hands of an artist. Critics and commentators prefer their artists of choice to be the victims or rebels of social



Nicholas Ray with James Dean



The wanderer: Nicholas Ray

or political systems. Ray made no consciously political films. He had one essential subject: home. What is home? Where is home? His last film was *We Can't Go Home Again*.

The home of Nicholas Raymond Kienzle was La Crosse, Wisconsin – a state that nurtured Orson Welles and his Ambersons. He went to the same school as Joseph Losey, though they were never close friends. A dissatisfied youth, Ray was born a wanderer. He searched constantly for friends and mentors like Thornton Wilder and especially the architect Frank Lloyd Wright, from whom Ray developed



'In a Lonely Place

the distinctive geometry of his CinemaScope visuals: horizontal images of homes, rooms and staircases that unite and divide families. McGilligan describes how Ray's persistent ambition to use split-screen techniques was constantly stopped by studio orthodoxy.

Drawn to experimental theatre – to the contrasts between the proscenium arch and in-the-round performance – Ray was noticed by Elia Kazan. It was Kazan introduced him to James Dean, and the two directors remained friends, alternately close and distant, until Ray's death. McGilligan is revealing on the



'The Lusty Men



previously unexplored position of Ray at the time of the HUAC investigation, during which Kazan named names. Perhaps Ray did secretly inform. After all, Howard Hughes was his admiring benefactor at RKO.

As a director of actors, Kazan was a ruling presence, but Ray was his actors' best friend. He could macho-bond with Bogart and Mitchum; he could be a sensitive father to Dean while being the lover of Natalie Wood, who was young enough to be his daughter. Where Kazan sought the big scenes, the confrontations, the turning-points for his characters, Ray hunted for the small moments, the uncertainties, the little giveaways in their behaviour.

Ray loved all-night parties, mixing with young actors, workshops, improvisations, constant rehearsals. (McGilligan suggests that this may have been influenced by Wright's Taliesin house seminars.) Often barely articulate, he was equally given to script revision before and during shooting, often to the exasperation of his actors. On the set of *The Lusty Men* Susan Hayward, a blunt woman, lost patience: "Hey, I'm from Brooklyn. What's the story?" Her character, confused by the two men in her rodeo trailer

Ray was a manic researcher into his characters' backgrounds, which brought confusion as well as insight

life, wanted just one thing: a home of her own. Ray was a manic researcher into his

characters' backgrounds, which brought confusion as well as insight. Too much information could be unwieldy, and that ironically fed Ray's indecisiveness: "I can contradict myself," said Walt Whitman. "Very well, I contradict myself." In this Ray was far from the ideal Hollywood director. His devotion to actors as instrumental to film style anticipated the work of John Cassavetes.

With his lifelong addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling, wives, lovers and – above all – youth, Ray confronted disappointment at every turn. But he never quite gave in to despair. The motto of the rodeo circuit in *The Lusty Men* is: "There ain't a steer that can't be rode. There ain't a cowboy that can't be throwed." At his troubled heart, Ray embraced failure and loss as inevitable in his life – and essential to his cinema. McGilligan's narrative is inevitably torn between admiration and resignation towards his haunted subject, as if Scott Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway had returned years later to write a full biography of James Gatz. §



'They Live by Night'

FILM AFTER FILM

Or, What Became of 21st Century Cinema?

By J. Hoberman, Verso, 298pp, £16.99, ISBN 9781844677511

Reviewed by Nick James

J. Hoberman is probably the most acute political analyst of cinema among the medium's regular commentators. You won't find a closer reading of how films made in the first decade or so of the 21st century intermeshed with the issues of their day than this volume – not, at least, from a US-centric point of view. The main claim of this book, based on reworked pre-existing writings, is one I endorse: that this "century's first decade abounded with significant and radically innovative cinema". However, I want to take issue with parts of Hoberman's thinking behind that claim, made in Part I – an expansion of an essay for Artforum on the changes that make 21st-century cinema distinctive from pre-digital and pre-9/11 cinema. But first let me consider the rest of the book.

The last of the book's three sections is called 'Notes Towards a Syllabus', and comprises short essays "reworked from class lectures and/or reviews" about films that Hoberman thinks are particularly germane to our times - included, he says, "by way of an addendum (or an extended footnote) to Part I". It's an eclectic chronological list that begins with Godard's In Praise of Love (Eloge de l'amour, 2001) and ends with Ceylan's *Once upon a Time in Anatolia* (2011), taking in films that use digital technology in interesting ways (Russian Ark, 10, Doqville), films about virtual or fake worlds (Oshii Mamoru's Avalon, Richard Kelly's Southland Tales, Jia Zhangke's The World), films nostalgic for the old cinema experience (Goodbye Dragon Inn) and films whose subjects relate to terrorism after 9/11 (Carlos, Julia Loktev's Day Night Day Night). Some of the titles overlap and regroup my simple categories, but all of them are expertly corralled into supporting Hoberman's opening argument.

Part II, 'A Chronicle of the Bush Years', is drawn mostly from Hoberman's pithy weekly Village Voice reports on politics and film. There's a painful excitement in reading such finesifting observation of how cinema reflected and reacted to the aftermath of the horrific attacks of 9/11. To be put back through that time again is to re-experience incredulity at the outlandish lack of understanding on the part of the US president and his administration. Here films are tasted mostly for their post-9/11 pungency, and there was a crop of films (Black Hawk Down, Collateral Damage, The Sum of All Fears, We Were Soldiers et al) that seemed designed to engage with the American mood in the aftermath of the tragedy. And if, at times, it seems as if Hoberman's militant mission was to find post-9/11 relevance whatever the film, he weaves together his observations into such a tough twine of inference and

At times it seems as if Hoberman's militant mission was to find post-9/11 relevance whatever the film



Ground zero: 9/11 is central to Hoberman's thesis

conviction that it's mostly persuasive.

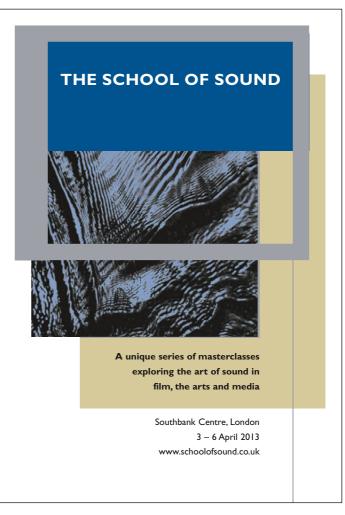
Which is why I'm surprised that I find Part I overheated. Hoberman's first precept – that "the motion picture medium has become irrevocably altered" – is obviously true in mechanical terms: during the period covered, digital has almost completely replaced analogue as the moving-image carriage medium. But the extent and impact of that change is subject here to a deal of speculative breathlessness.

The first central issue is the passing of André Bazin's idea that photography, being a record of light falling on a chemically sensitive surface, carries an authentic trace of reality – with the sense that the digital trace, being a sequence of numbers that's infinitely and more easily manipulable, breaks that connection to the real. I'm among the first to mourn that change for aesthetic reasons, but the language Hoberman uses in making his argument (drawing on Lev Manovich, Babette Mangolte, David Rodowick and others) would have you imagine a cinema that will have no connection to real experience: "all movies will be animated", "a technique that leads to the production of useful lies", "digital image-making precludes the necessity of having the world", digital's "intrinsic inability to embody temporal duration or a sense of time", "CGI inherently strives to remake the world". My problem with this rhetorical temperature is that it overstates the case. It's as if Hollywood didn't inherently strive to remake the world from the very start. After all, a digital camera still records what's in front of it, the art of cinema is still based on mimesis, and the analogue photographic medium itself was anyway always vulnerable to manipulation.

Hoberman's second precept for the big change in cinema is 9/11. He believes that "the events of 9/11 were a show of cinematic might" and that the combination of that event and the coming of digital "could not help but challenge, mystify, and provoke filmmakers as individuals while, at the same time, dramatizing their medium directly in an impersonal way". The success and popularity of a series like Homeland shows us that 9/11-related matters are still very much on our collective minds. But 9/11's gamechanging prominence seems nonetheless a UScentric viewpoint. In the European half of the Western world, the financial collapse of 2008 is an even more significant destructive event, since it is pulling apart the very political fabric of Europe and impoverishing a vast number of people. So the 9/11 thesis seems like another overstatement of the case. Though Hoberman recruits many films made across the world to further his argument, their makers might not all be in complete agreement with him as to what made them innovative in the 21st century. 9







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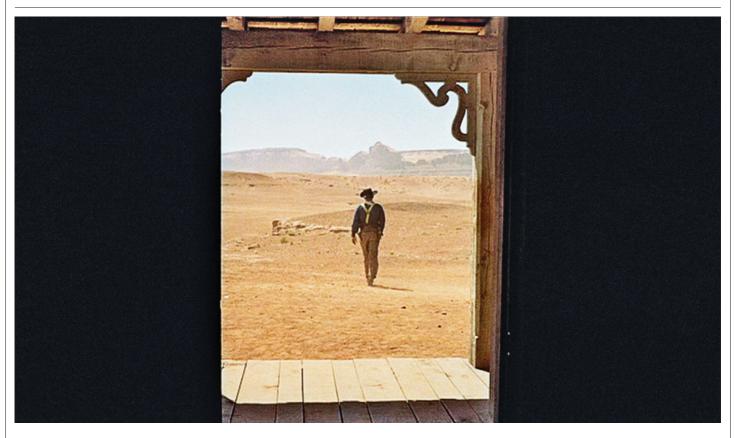
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ENDINGS...

THE SEARCHERS



A man silently silhouetted in a doorway has never been as eloquent as in the closing shot of John Ford's *The Searchers*

By Graham Fuller

"Let's go home, Debbie." The last words spoken in *The Searchers* by Ethan Edwards (John Wayne), lifting up his niece (Natalie Wood) and cradling her in his arms instead of killing her, are as ironic as his sister-in-law Martha's "Welcome home, Ethan" at the start. "Let's go home" implies "our" home, but the desert house where Debbie lived as a child before being taken into captivity was destroyed seven years previously by Chief Scar's Comanches, and with it her family. And since Ethan and Martha (Dorothy Jordan) had been secretly in love, he had never belonged at the Edwards hearth anyway.

According to the lyrics of Stan Jones's song, which frames John Ford's 1956 masterpiece, Ethan is a man who has turned his back on home to "ride away" and search for "peace o' mind". This self-imposed exile surely refers not to his and Martin Pawley's absence on their quest to find Debbie during the film, but to Ethan's years as a Confederate sergeant and outlaw before the action begins, and the solitude he chooses at the end.

The haunting, dialogue-less final scene mirrors the first, in which Winton C. Hoch's camera follows Martha as she opens the door of her house and steps from the darkness onto the porch, joining her husband, son and two daughters to watch Ethan riding towards

them across Monument Valley. At the close Ethan — with Debbie beside him on his horse, and followed by Martin (Jeffrey Hunter) — rides across a river towards the Jorgensen ranch. The Jorgensens (Olive Carey and John Qualen), their daughter Laurie (Vera Miles) and the sage fool Mose Harper (Hank Worden) are momentarily framed on their verandah from a side angle, just as the doomed Edwardses were on theirs — before Laurie runs out to greet Martin, her impatiently awaited lover.

With the Sons of the Pioneers striking up Jones's song on the soundtrack, Ethan helps Debbie dismount. A shot from the porch shows Ethan carrying her to the house, where Mrs Jorgensen embraces her. The camera reversedollies through the doorway – bookending the film's opening shot - and Debbie and the Jorgensens are swallowed by the darkness of the interior. Ethan, centre-frame, gracefully steps aside to allow Laurie and Martin to enter too. As the wind turns up the brim of his hat, Ethan stands alone, his left hand clutching his right arm at the elbow, before wheeling around and sauntering, a little unsteadily, into the saffron waste. It's the walk of a man whose Achilles-like deeds are over, and who has nowhere to go.

Like the dead Comanche warrior whose eyes he shot out earlier in the film, Ethan is fated "to wander forever between the winds". Long driven by his furious need to avenge

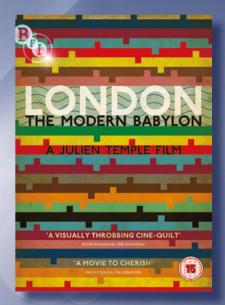
Like the dead Comanche warrior whose eyes he shot out, Ethan is fated "to wander forever between the winds" Martha's rape and murder by Scar, he cannot be contained by society, despite the softening he has undergone during the course of the film. The door closes on him, separating him from all that is civilised and familial. It's tempting to think that he is shortly going to die: the darkness that excludes him echoes that in the outbuilding where he found Martha's corpse and the cave where, poisoned by an Indian arrow, he escaped from Scar – and thus might be associated with death. But Ford and screenwriter Frank S.Nugent preclude their tragic hero's mortality (unlike Alan LeMay in his source novel). Ethan die? That'll be the day.

No discussion of the ending of *The Searchers* is complete without mentioning the significance of Wayne's gesture when he places his hand on his arm that way. It was – as he told Kevin Brownlow in the Western episode of the 1980 TV series *Hollywood* – an affectionate homage to his and Ford's late friend and mentor, the silent Western star Harry Carey, who "incessantly", Wayne said, made that gesture of vulnerability: sitting on different fallen trees, Carey's "good badman" does it twice in the last few minutes of Ford's first feature *Straight Shooting* (1917), as he decides whether to settle down with the woman he loves or ride away.

When the shot was filmed, Harry Carey Jr (who plays Laurie's brother) was standing behind the camera inside the Jorgensen house with his mother Olive Carey. According to his account, Wayne caught Olive's eye as he struck the pose, making her cry. "I'd known and loved both of them," Wayne told Brownlow. "It was a lovely dramatic moment in my life and I'm sure in hers." Intertextuality in cinema has seldom been so transcendently moving. §



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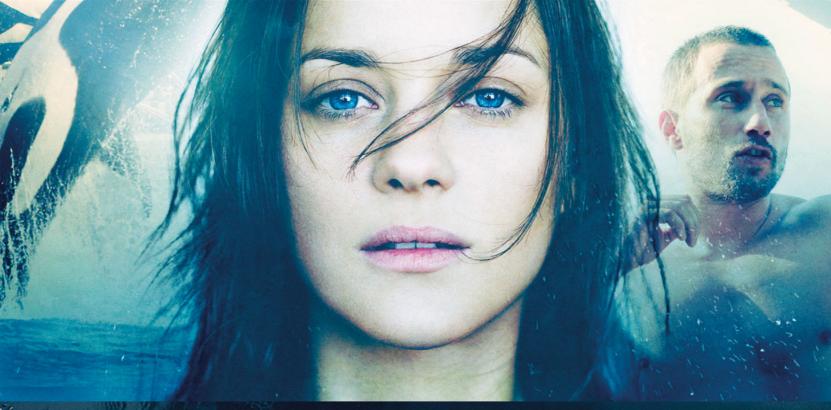
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